

Metaphysics in the Reformation

A Case Study of Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562)

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Declaration

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution.

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It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee.

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Introduction

This dissertation enquires into the metaphysics of the Protestant Reformation by examining the thought of Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562) as a case study. In this introduction, I will first situate the present work in relation to earlier scholarly literature on the philosophical background of the Protestant Reformation. This will lead, secondly, to methodological reflections on the approach I propose to take, as well as on the structure of this study. Thirdly, I will provide a short introduction to the life and work of Peter Martyr Vermigli for those readers unfamiliar with the Italian-born theologian.¹

1) The Reformation and Philosophy: A Review of Relevant Literature

During the twentieth century, two scholarly discourses were concerned with the philosophical background of the Protestant Reformation: the discourse about the emergence and nature of Protestant scholasticism, and the discourse about the influences of (late) medieval philosophical schools upon the theology of the Reformation. As we shall see, Peter Martyr Vermigli has played a significant role in the literature of the former, but only a minor role in the relevant works of the latter discourse. In what follows, I will review these older discourses, highlighting some of their methodological problems. This will lead me to propose an alternative and novel methodological approach to understanding the philosophical background of the Reformation, which is based on enquiring into the structures of being and causality implicit in the theological work of Peter Martyr Vermigli. The merit of this approach, I will argue, is that it enables us more clearly to express a complexity that is present in Vermigli's thought – and arguably also in that of other Reformers.

A work regularly cited in the debates around the relationship between the Reformation and Protestant (especially Reformed) scholasticism is Brian Armstrong's 1969 study, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*. In this study Armstrong proposes that there is a significant rift between the "humanistically oriented" and "biblically and

¹ His Italian name, Pietro Martire Vermigli, was Latinised Petrus Martyr Vermilius. His contemporaries generally knew him as Peter Martyr or simply as Martyr, a form often used by the man himself. Present-day scholarly literature calls him either Martyr or Vermigli. I will use the latter.

experientially based” theology of Calvin, on the one hand, and the theology of the Protestant scholastics of the late sixteenth and seventeenth century, on the other hand.² In Armstrong’s estimation, the latter prevailed in Reformed Protestantism around 1600. He considered this to be a sign of decline, for it indicates a “divergence from a theology which had been carefully constructed by Calvin to represent faithfully the scriptural teaching.”³ This is the background against which Armstrong analyses the work of Moïse Amyraut (1596-1664), a professor of theology at the Academy of Saumur. Armstrong proposes that Amyraut was wrongly considered a heretic by the ‘orthodox’ Protestants of his time. Indeed, he holds that Amyraut was more faithful to Calvin than any of his allegedly orthodox, Protestant scholastic contemporaries. But how did it happen that these Protestant scholastics diverged so much from Calvin’s theology? It is here that Peter Martyr Vermigli – together with Girolamo Zanchi and Theodore Beza – plays a major role in Armstrong’s account. Armstrong argues that the scholasticism that “held sway” in seventeenth century Reformed theology began in the work of these three men.⁴ Repeatedly, he mentions this triumvirate who are the clear villains in his narrative. It is telling, however, that Armstrong also acknowledges that Peter Martyr Vermigli’s thought – at the time he was writing – had not yet been studied sufficiently to determine whether he was a “scholastic” at all.⁵

However, if Armstrong’s judgement is not based on an analysis of Vermigli’s writings, where does it originate? Armstrong claims that “one ought naturally to expect a scholastic methodology in Martyr’s theology”⁶ because Philip McNair, the biographer of Vermigli’s early years mentioned that he retained a “warm regard for the Aristotelianism” of his university teachers in Padua though all of his life.⁷ Furthermore, Armstrong asserts that Zanchi (whose “scholasticism” seems to be beyond dispute for Armstrong) was a student of Vermigli’s and that “it would seem surprising if the methodology of the master were not reflected in his student.” And finally, he takes the fact that Vermigli lectured on

² Brian G. Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism and Humanism in Seventeenth-Century France* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), 32.

³ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 188.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

⁷ Philip M. McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy: Anatomy of Apostasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 107.

Aristotle while in Strasbourg to “point in [the] direction” of his “scholasticism.”⁸ These three reasons – all formulated in tentative terms or in the conditional tense – are all the evidence that Armstrong presents before concluding that “there is little doubt in my mind” that Vermigli’s thought was scholastic.⁹ Given that Armstrong’s evidence for his assessment of Vermigli is minimal, why does Vermigli nonetheless play a crucial role in his account of how Protestant scholasticism developed? The reason for this is related to the architecture of Armstrong’s book and flows from its implicit premises. As mentioned above, Armstrong asserts that Moïse Amyraut was more faithful to Calvin than his contemporaries, such as, for instance, Pierre Du Moulin (1568-1658). That this is no impartial exegetical observation, but rather a value judgement, can be seen from his description of the scholasticism of Du Moulin and others. Protestant scholasticism, for Armstrong, is characterised by a tendency to “assert[] religious truth on the basis of deductive ratiocination” in such a way that “reason assumes at least equal standing with faith in theology, thus jettisoning some of the authority of revelation.”¹⁰ This description has a negative overtone, especially when contrasted with the “dynamic, experiential, historically, and exegetically grounded faith enunciated by Calvin” (as one reviewer highly sympathetic to Armstrong’s project put it).¹¹ In Armstrong’s view, the scholastic “systems” of Du Moulin and the like are simply “narrow,” “defensive,” “intolerant,” and “impervious.”¹²

But Armstrong is not only sympathetic to Amyraut’s thought and critical of Du Moulin’s, he is equally biased against any theologian whom Du Moulin favoured, or whom Amyraut opposed. And this is precisely the context in which Armstrong’s low opinion of Vermigli originates, as can be seen from two comments made almost in passing. In the first one, Armstrong writes that

One of the most arresting features of Amyraut’s doctrine of predestination is that his opposition to orthodox teaching was made in the name of Calvin

⁸ Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 131.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 32.

¹¹ Ford Lewis Battles, “Review of ‘Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy: Protestant Scholasticism And Humanism In Seventeenth-Century France’ by Brian G. Armstrong,” *Theology Today* 27, no. 4 (1971): 479.

¹² Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, xix.

and the early reformers, presenting at the same time a decided bias against Beza, Martyr and Zanchi.¹³

The same three men that are the villains in Armstrong's narrative are therefore held in disfavour by Amyraut. In turn, as Armstrong also writes, these three men were greatly esteemed by the scholastics of Amyraut's time.¹⁴ In sum, it seems therefore likely that Armstrong's bias against Vermigli in particular originates from his implicit agreement with Amyraut's view of him, especially because he scantily knows Vermigli's work, and is sympathetic to Amyraut.

Carl Trueman and Scott Clark have convincingly argued that the view of Protestant scholasticism assumed by Armstrong has its intellectual roots liberalism's reaction against a pre-critical comprehensive rational system. Because scholasticism was the attempt to adapt Reformation thought to the demands of the academy, "it constituted something of a threat to post-Kantian theology because it was a competing explanation of history and reality which did not depend upon the phenomenal-noumenal distinction for its starting point and yet was not anti-intellectual obscurantism."¹⁵ In liberalism, the Kantian approach won the battle, and hence labelled Protestant scholastic orthodoxy "dead," just as the Renaissance had labelled the Middle Ages "dark."

This labelling is most explicit in Armstrong's characterisation of Protestant scholasticism. Apart from the tendency to "deductive ratiocination" we have already seen, Armstrong deems scholasticism to have "a pronounced interest in metaphysical matters, in abstract, speculative thought." Indeed, he holds that Calvin's and Luther's theology had been "overcome by the metaphysics and deductive logic of a restored Aristotelianism."¹⁶ For Armstrong, metaphysics is therefore associated with abstract and speculative thought, and with an undesirable dominance of Aristotle's philosophy in theological literature.

John Patrick Donnelly's *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace* is the most important direct answer to Armstrong's work. It is Donnelly's

¹³ Ibid., 158.

¹⁴ Ibid., 188.

¹⁵ Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark, "Introduction," in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), xii.

¹⁶ Armstrong, *Calvinism and the Amyraut Heresy*, 32.

declared aim to examine “whether Martyr was a Protestant scholastic.”¹⁷ Acknowledging that any answer to this question depends on the definition given to scholasticism, Donnelly first compares Vermigli’s with medieval scholasticism. In this sense, Vermigli can be said to borrow his methodology from scholastic philosophy, Donnelly holds, insofar as he employs syllogisms and has a “penchant for constructing definitions according to the scheme of the four Aristotelian causes.”¹⁸ Moreover, Vermigli’s literary forms “recall those of scholasticism. He uses both the commentary and the *quaestio*, although he tends to combine them” through inserting *scholia* in his running commentaries.¹⁹ Nevertheless, Donnelly wishes to be cautious; “there are limits to Martyr’s scholasticism,” he stresses.²⁰ These limits apply especially to Armstrong’s definition of scholasticism. Only one element of Armstrong’s description of scholasticism can be clearly found in Vermigli, Donnelly holds, namely his affinity for Aristotelian philosophy. However, Vermigli “never allows reason to attain a status equal or superior to faith.”²¹ Donnelly therefore concludes with regard to the genesis of Protestant scholasticism, *pace* Armstrong, that “Martyr, Beza and Zanchi did not bring about Reformed scholasticism.”²² Rather, according to Donnelly, the “most important factor” for the development of this scholasticism was “the continued teaching of Aristotle as the basis of philosophical education, indeed of most undergraduate education, in the vast majority of academies and universities.”²³ Nevertheless, Donnelly holds that Vermigli set an example for these developments: “He was the first important Reformed theologian to incorporate a large amount of scholastic terminology and method into his theology. In doing so he set a sign of approval on this theological approach.”²⁴

Richard Muller has done much to further the debate about Vermigli’s involvement in the emergence of Protestant scholasticism. First of all, in *The Unaccommodated Calvin*, he argues that Calvin’s polemics against scholastic theology were more nuanced than previously thought, and did not amount to a rejection of scholastic theology or

¹⁷ John Patrick Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli’s Doctrine of Man and Grace* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 6.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 198.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 199.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, 200.

²² *Ibid.*, 194.

²³ *Ibid.*, 192.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 194.

methodology.²⁵ In *After Calvin*, he extended this inquiry to the Development of the Calvinist or Reformed “theological tradition,” arguing that the negative bias against Protestant scholasticism exemplified in the work of Armstrong and others ought to be set aside.²⁶ Instead of assuming a contrast between Calvin and the thought of later Calvinists, Muller calls for more a nuanced discussion of the continuities and discontinuities between the Reformation and later Protestantism. The setup of his study leads him to survey an impressive array of sixteenth-century thinkers. Muller’s comments on or exegesis of Vermigli’s work are therefore not extensive, but nevertheless insightful. He essentially considers Vermigli to stand in the same relation to Calvin as Melanchthon to Luther: “Reformed theology, in the person of Peter Martyr Vermigli, received much the same impetus toward the appropriation of philosophy that Lutheranism received from Melanchthon.”²⁷ This means, he holds, that when comparing Melanchthon with Luther, and Vermigli with Calvin, the “relative amount of emphasis on natural theology and ... on the use of reason” is greater in the case of Melanchthon’s and Vermigli’s theology.²⁸

In the scholarship which has been more directly concerned with Vermigli’s work than Muller’s, the debate has largely revolved around whether and how Vermigli can be called a scholastic or humanist, or both. Joseph McLelland has argued that Vermigli “combines ‘humanism’ and ‘scholasticism’ in a positive way, so that he is less the villain than Armstrong thinks, and the more significant.”²⁹ By contrast, Marvin Anderson proposed in the same year that Vermigli was essentially a humanist, which – he asserted – could be seen from the “anti-scholastic bent of Martyr’s mind.”³⁰ This debate is so dependent on extremely disputed definitions – of ‘scholasticism’ and ‘humanism’ – that it basically seems futile. Nevertheless, Frank A. James resumed the debate in 1999, arguing that it was “Vermigli’s Augustinianism which provided the intellectual link

²⁵ Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁶ Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 134.

²⁹ Joseph C. McLelland, “Peter Martyr Vermigli: Scholastic or Humanist?,” in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform*, ed. Joseph C. McLelland (Waterloo: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 1980), 141–52, here 143.

³⁰ Marvin W. Anderson, “Peter Martyr Vermigli: Protestant Humanist,” in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform*, ed. Joseph C. McLelland (Waterloo: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 1980), 65–84, here 69.

between his late medieval scholasticism with its humanist modification and his role as a ‘codifier’ of Reformed scholasticism.”³¹ James had earlier completed a doctorate on the influence of the Augustinian Gregory of Rimini on Vermigli³² and it is from there that his conviction that Vermigli should be best labelled an Augustinian comes. Moreover, James assumes a dichotomy between Vermigli’s methodology and theology when he concludes that Vermigli used “both scholastic and humanist methods” to serve an “Augustinian content.”³³

The assumption of a division between form and content is indeed prevalent in the discourses I have surveyed. Muller holds that the “scholastic element in the thought of Vermigli” is of a “methodological nature” and that generally, “scholasticism” concerns “issues of method rather than issues of theological content.”³⁴ By contrast, most literary scholars and historians would take it for granted that a text’s content cannot be fully understood in abstraction from the literary form and historical context in which it was written. To declare only Vermigli’s method “scholastic” (or “humanist”), while his theology is allegedly untouched by this form, is therefore not desirable – and arguably not even possible.³⁵

In sum, the broader debate about the relationship between the Reformation and the developments following it has moved away from an approach like Anderson’s that reifies “Calvinism” and “Protestant scholasticism,” researching instead the complexity and interrelatedness of various thinkers in their developments. Vermigli scholarship, by contrast, is still largely concerned with seemingly static labels for Vermigli’s theology. As we have seen, however, the insight gained by calling Vermigli a “scholastic” or a “humanist” is minimal, since it is dependent on prior, reifying definitions of these labels. In order to get out of this impasse, I will below propose a different approach to Vermigli’s

³¹ Frank A. James, “Peter Martyr Vermigli: At the Crossroads of Late Medieval Scholasticism, Christian Humanism and Resurgent Augustinianism,” in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 62–78, here 77.

³² Frank A. James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination: The Augustinian Inheritance of an Italian Reformer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

³³ James, “Peter Martyr Vermigli: At the Crossroads of Late Medieval Scholasticism, Christian Humanism and Resurgent Augustinianism,” 78.

³⁴ Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition*, 69; 15.

³⁵ In the context of Vermigli scholarship, this has been equally noted by Norman Klassen, “Nature, Virtue, and Humanism: Cross-Disciplinary Reflections on Vermigli’s Romans Commentary (10-16),” in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. Frank A. James (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 197–212, here 197.

work, which is based on a re-appraisal of metaphysics as a heuristic category leading to a fresh insight into nature of Vermigli's theology. Before turning to an exposition of my methodological approach, however, I shall review the second of the above mentioned debates.

The second major scholarly debate relating to the philosophical background of the Protestant Reformation is concerned with the influences of various medieval schools on the theology of the Reformers. Donnelly's book, which we have encountered already, is a good way into these debates. Indeed, it would almost seem that Donnelly is implicitly more interested in the connection between the philosophical schools of the Middle Ages and the Reformation and its historiographical implications than he is in the question of whether or not Vermigli is a Protestant scholastic. As he makes explicit in the final chapter, Donnelly is throughout at pains to emphasise Vermigli's affinities with Thomas Aquinas – as well as, conversely, the relatively minor influence exerted on him by nominalism. He maintains that Vermigli's scholasticism "stands far closer to Thomism than to any other major school of the Middle Ages."³⁶ This judgement is based on the fact that Vermigli's training was mainly Thomistic and that he cited Thomas extensively. Donnelly's extensive qualitative research into the number of times Vermigli explicitly refers to certain sources shows that Vermigli cites Aquinas more often than any other scholastic except Lombard, and that he cites more individual works of Thomas than of any other theologian (except some of the Fathers).³⁷

The reason this finding matters to Donnelly is historiographical, namely, that some Roman Catholic historiography of the Reformation has seen in Reformation thought the influence of nominalism. He refers to a number of Catholic theologians, who held the thesis of a nominalist influence on Luther, such as Heinrich Denifle around 1900 and Joseph Lortz sixty years later.³⁸ A similar claim was made more broadly of the Reformation by Louis Bouyer.³⁹ In contrast to what these theologians have assumed, Donnelly wishes

³⁶ Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace*, 202.

³⁷ Ibid. See Donnelly's chapter "The Sources of Martyr's Thought," Ibid., 13–41.

³⁸ Heinrich Denifle, *Luther und Lutherthum, in der ersten Entwicklung quellenmässig dargestellt*, 2 vols. (Mainz: Kirchheim, 1904); Joseph Lortz, *Die Reformation in Deutschland* (Freiburg i. B.: Herder, 1962).

³⁹ Louis Bouyer, *Du Protestantisme à l'Église* (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1954); translated into English as Louis Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, trans. A.V. Littledale (London: Scepter Publishers, 2001).

to “urge” that there is no “tight” connection between nominalist thought and Protestant theology. Indeed, he ventures that

The thesis that Occam is the foster father of Protestantism needs revision in the light of Peter Martyr's theology. Martyr's teachings on the sacraments, justification, predestination, and God's sovereignty yield little in vigor to Luther and Calvin. Yet Martyr came to these conclusions out of a generally Thomistic rather than Occamist background.⁴⁰

Donnelly made the same argument and developed it further in an article entitled ‘Calvinist Thomism.’⁴¹ Here, he insists that

the theology of Vermigli ... show[s] that when Protestants came to recast their theology into a scholastic form, they rather consistently avoided nominalism as a base. Insofar as the roots of Protestant scholasticism go back to the Middle Ages, they tend to go back to the *via antiqua* and Thomism. Protestant fruit grows well on the Thomist tree, even better than on the nominalist tree. In this light the intrinsic connections between Protestantism and nominalism become less important or even questionable.⁴²

Louis Bouyer presents the most elaborate account of the position Donnelly is opposing here, and we shall consider his argument in order better to situate Donnelly's claim.⁴³ Bouyer's thesis is that what he calls the “positive principles of the Reformation” are not necessarily or intrinsically connected to its negations. He goes as far as to say that the positive principles of Protestantism, as reformulations of biblical Christian truths, must be “held to be true and necessary in virtue of Catholic tradition itself.”⁴⁴ Nevertheless, Bouyer maintains, these principles were narrowed and turned ‘negative’ in the context of polemical demarcations. For example, the Reformers famously affirmed that human salvation depends fully on, and is granted through God's abundant grace, *sola gratia*. This affirmation, however, was eventually associated with a denial of any human contribution to, or even implication in salvation, to the point of understanding salvation as merely extrinsic to human beings.⁴⁵ Bouyer asserts that there is no necessary connection between

⁴⁰ Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace*, 204.

⁴¹ John Patrick Donnelly, “Calvinist Thomism,” *Viator*, no. 7 (1976): 441–55.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 454.

⁴³ An extended version of the argument which follows is forthcoming as Silvianna Aspray, “A Complex Legacy: Louis Bouyer and the Metaphysics of the Reformation,” *Modern Theology*, 2018.

⁴⁴ Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, 166–67.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 168.

the affirmation of the sola gratia and the denial of any implication of human beings in their salvation, for one can arguably hold the former without the latter. In order to endorse the view that God's salvific action is a pure gratuitous gift, it is not necessary to subscribe to an understanding of grace as merely extrinsic to human beings. Where then, Bouyer asks, does the impetus for negations like this one originate? What was present in the Reformation, so bound up with its positive principles, that – in the eyes of the Catholic church – the Reformation turned heretical, despite its genuinely Christian principles? Bouyer's answer to this question is 'nominalism'. The Reformation's negations are, he holds, the offspring of an unholy alliance of Reformation thinking with nominalist metaphysics. The Reformers unconsciously inherited a nominalist understanding of how God and the world relate, Bouyer argues, and it was this "vitiating framework" which, when used to expound the positive insights of the Reformation, compromised them.⁴⁶ Hence, Bouyer concludes, if anything, the Reformers were not radical enough. They did not sufficiently realise their own captivity to a nominalist metaphysics.⁴⁷

What, however, is the nominalism Bouyer refers to? It is, he says, at core a radical empiricism which reduces all being to what is perceived. In such a system, every being is seen as a monad, impenetrable by any other. This is also the case because "being is no more than a word without content"⁴⁸ – which in turn means that the concept of an ontological difference between God and creation becomes unintelligible. God has to be thought as part of the same ontological order as human beings, distinguished from them mainly through his power.⁴⁹ In these circumstances, whatever action God carries out cannot and must not be carried out by human persons, and vice versa. Human actions can be seen as taking something away from what is rightfully God's in a kind of zero-sum game.⁵⁰ That the positive affirmations of the Reformation were entangled with negations, and often presupposed ultimately unhelpful dichotomies, for Bouyer, is owing to the metaphysical framework in which they were expressed. Protestantism is for him, right

⁴⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 231.

⁴⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, 184.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 185f.

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*, 186.

⁵⁰ For the purpose of the argument, I merely wish to present Bouyer's notion of 'nominalism', without passing judgement on whether his portrayal of nominalist philosophy or theology is balanced or fair. It is to be noted that in *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, Bouyer neither gives evidence for the sources of his notion of nominalism, nor engages with primary texts.

from the start, a complex conglomerate of positive affirmations retrieving genuine Biblical and traditional truths, on the one hand, and a detrimental nominalist metaphysics, on the other hand, which the Reformers did not consciously choose to embrace: “Brought up on these [viz. nominalist] lines of thought ... the Reformers could only systematize their very valuable insights in a vitiated framework.”⁵¹

In all of this, Bouyer is a representative – perhaps the fairest and least polemical – of the kind of argument against which Donnelly reacts. Donnelly holds, as we have seen, that the thesis of a nominalist (or *via moderna*) influence on the Reformation needs to be dropped because Vermigli is a Reformer not influenced by nominalism, but much more by Thomism or the *via antiqua*.

There is a considerable body of scholarly literature on the influence of medieval and late medieval philosophical thought, especially the *via antiqua* and the *via moderna*, on the Reformers. This literature mostly enquires into direct influences of certain medieval authors on Luther, Calvin and others, often taking explicit references in the work of the latter as their starting point.⁵² Such a method is certainly valuable, even though the use of ‘influence’ as a category is not without its problems. For, to say that the Reformation is influenced by this or that strand of medieval thought means to start from the perspective of the Reformation from the outset, potentially reducing the influencers to their latter-day reception. Moreover, there is the danger of tacitly assuming a simplistic model of causality in history; as if every development in history could be traced to and fully explained by a finite number of influences. Heiko Oberman – one of the most notable researchers on the relationship between the Reformation and the Late Middle ages, and critic of Louis Bouyer’s negative assessment of nominalism⁵³ – understood this danger well, and established that when employing the category of “influence,” one ought not to

⁵¹ Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, 231.

⁵² To mention only a few recent examples: Theodor Dieter, “Luther as a Late Medieval Theologian: His Positive and Negative Use of Nominalism and Realism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther’s Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and Lubomir Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 31–48; Mark C Mattes, “Luther’s Use of Philosophy,” *Lutherjahrbuch* 80 (2013): 110–41; B J Van der Walt, “Philosophical and Theological Influences in John Calvin’s Thought: Reviewing Some Research Results,” *In Die Skriflig* 44, no. 3 (2010): 105–27.

⁵³ Heiko A. Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1963) see particularly the Postscript on “The Catholicity of Nominalism”, p. 423-8.

enquire into “the *nature of the cause* but the *structure of the change*.”⁵⁴ However, Oberman still limits his enquiry to finding the forerunners of notions and frameworks explicitly employed or referred to by the Reformers. This method potentially limits the scope of what he can perceive, especially in the ‘forerunners’, but arguably even in the Reformers. An example from another field of study might help to illuminate this: The art historian Hans Belting, when tracing the influences between the use of perspective in the East and the West, holds that changing between different historical viewpoints (*Blickwechsel*) helps to illuminate a certain phenomenon more thoroughly than it could have been from a single perspective.⁵⁵ In our present context, *mutatis mutandis*, this would mean that a medieval perspective on the metaphysics of the Reformation – beyond what the Reformers either positively or negatively referred to – would help to bring to the fore certain constellations in Reformation thought which otherwise might not be seen.

Another methodological difficulty of the debates about the influence of various medieval schools on the philosophical commitments of the Reformers concerns the difficulty of defining some of its categories. Especially ‘nominalism’ is a highly disputed category, fraught with at least two conceptual and historiographical difficulties. First, nominalism is a notoriously under-defined term. This can be seen, for instance, in Bouyer’s work, where he seemingly takes it to be a self-explanatory category. The only hint he provides for what he means by it is that he seems to use nominalism interchangeably with William of Ockham’s thought.⁵⁶ Historians of the period disagree over whether this equation is appropriate, given both the convergences and divergences between Ockham and other thinkers of the time, such as Gabriel Biel and Pierre d’Ailly, and given also that none of Ockham’s contemporaries would have called him a nominalist.⁵⁷ It is moreover contested whether and how nominalism as a concept reaches beyond epistemology into ontology.⁵⁸ Bouyer clearly assumes the latter, taking it for granted that the univocity of being is a characteristic of nominalism.⁵⁹ All of this suggests

⁵⁴ Heiko A. Oberman, *Forerunners of the Reformation: The Shape of Late Medieval Thought* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1967), 39 (italics in the original).

⁵⁵ Hans Belting, *Florenz und Bagdad: eine westöstliche Geschichte des Blicks* (München: Beck, 2008).

⁵⁶ Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, 184.

⁵⁷ William J. Courtenay, “Nominalism and Late Medieval Religion,” in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. Charles Trinkaus and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 26–59.

⁵⁸ Fritz Hoffmann, “Nominalismus,” *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, VI (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984), 874–88.

⁵⁹ Bouyer, *The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, 185–86.

that – in contrast to Bouyer’s seemingly self-evident use of the concept – defining or understanding nominalism is far from evident.⁶⁰

Secondly, and somewhat independently of how one wishes to *understand* nominalism, it is not clear how it is to be *assessed* – both regarding its place in the history of theology and that of modernity. As we have seen above, Bouyer assesses ‘nominalism’ in unambiguously negative terms. It is, for him, the root of highly problematic, indeed heretical, developments in theology; and he was not alone with this appraisal. Among the *Nouvelle Théologie* thinkers of Bouyer’s time, it was common to deplore the decay of the realist synthesis of reason and faith in the Late Middle Ages, with Étienne Gilson leading the way.⁶¹ Others, by contrast, wished to defend the ‘catholicity’ of nominalism.⁶² To make matters more complicated still, scholars of the history of ideas have moreover repeatedly associated ‘nominalism’ and the univocity of being with the genesis of modernity⁶³ – thereby further refracting and entangling anyone’s assessment of it by means of their respective stance on modernity.

French historians of the Middle Ages have recently contributed to these debates by dating the shifts in modal logic and metaphysics which eventually paved the way for modernity further back than Ockham or ‘nominalism’. André de Muralt, Jean-François Courtine, Olivier Boulnois and others have argued that Ockham is to be seen as part of a tradition which originated earlier, merely making more explicit certain metaphysical configurations which appeared for the first time in the thirteenth century, most prominently in the work of John Duns Scotus.⁶⁴ The argument goes that these

⁶⁰ This is moreover highlighted by the fact that scholars have only recently substantially revisited some core concepts associated with it, like God’s *potentia absoluta* and *ordinata*. See William J. Courtenay, “The Dialectic of Divine Omnipotence in the Age of Chaucer: A Reconsideration,” in *Nominalism and Literary Discourse: New Perspectives*, ed. Hugo Keiper, Christoph Bode, and Richard J. Utz (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), 111–21.

⁶¹ Étienne Gilson, *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1955), 487–520.

⁶² Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Late Medieval Nominalism*; Heiko A. Oberman, “The Shape of Late Medieval Thought: The Birthpangs of the Modern Era,” in *The Pursuit of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Religion*, ed. Charles Trinkaus and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 3–25.

⁶³ See the accounts of scholars as different as, for example: Louis K. Dupré, *Passage to Modernity: An Essay in the Hermeneutics of Nature and Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993); Michael A. Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008); Thomas Pfau, *Minding the Modern: Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions, and Responsible Knowledge* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).

⁶⁴ Olivier Boulnois, *Être et représentation: Une généalogie de la métaphysique moderne à l’époque de Duns Scot, XIIIe-XIVe siècle* (Paris: PUF, 1999); André de Muralt, *Néoplatonisme et Aristotélisme Dans La*

configurations – especially the univocity of being – will eventually determine not only ‘nominalism’, but also modernity. John Milbank and Catherine Pickstock have drawn on this French debate and furthered it by relating it to politics and postmodern theoretical developments.⁶⁵ Together with Eric Alliez⁶⁶ they moreover argue that the univocity of being ought be seen as a metaphysical thesis, and not a merely logical one, as some have claimed.⁶⁷ Olivier Boulnois has indirectly concurred, by arguing that not only the univocity of being, but also nominalism has a metaphysical dimension; it is more than a linguistic thesis, but rather generalises the univocity of being to the micro level.⁶⁸ Daniel Horan has sought to critique this discourse by suggesting that Duns Scotus, when proposing the univocity of being, did not intend for it to have metaphysical consequences.⁶⁹ He does not, however, engage with the question of whether the consequences which Milbank, Pickstock and others draw from the univocity of being are implied by what Scotus wrote. Yet another approach is taken by Ludger Honnefelder, who agrees with the metaphysical nature of the thesis of the univocity of being, and that it is significant in the genesis of modernity. In contrast to Pickstock and Milbank, however, he welcomes the development.⁷⁰ The role of the Reformation in this genealogy has not been considered so far, with the exception of Brad Gregory, who holds that the univocity of being was intensified in the Reformation, such that the religious renewal unintentionally became a motor of secular and fragmented modernity.⁷¹

Métaphysique Médiévale: Analogie, Causalité, Participation (Paris: Vrin, 1995); Jean-François Courtine, *Inventio Analogiae: Métaphysique et Ontothéologie* (Paris: Vrin, 2005).

⁶⁵ John Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order: The Representation of Being and the Representation of the People* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Catherine Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy* (Malden MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1998); Catherine Pickstock, “Duns Scotus: His Historical and Contemporary Significance,” *Modern Theology* 21, no. 4 (2005): 543–74.

⁶⁶ Eric Alliez, *Capital Times: Tales from the Conquest of Time*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

⁶⁷ See e.g. Thomas Williams, “The Doctrine of Univocity Is True and Salutary,” *Modern Theology* 21, no. 4 (2005): 575–85; Richard Cross, “‘Where Angels Fear to Tread’: Duns Scotus and Radical Orthodoxy,” *Antonianum* LXXVI, no. 1 (2001): 7–41.

⁶⁸ Olivier Boulnois, *Métaphysiques rebelles: genèse et structures d’une science au Moyen Âge* (Paris: PUF, 2013).

⁶⁹ Daniel P. Horan, *Postmodernity and Univocity: A Critical Account of Radical Orthodoxy and John Duns Scotus* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014).

⁷⁰ Ludger Honnefelder, *Ens in quantum ens: Der Begriff des Seienden als solchen als Gegenstand der Metaphysik nach der Lehre des Johannes Duns Scotus* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1979); Ludger Honnefelder, *Johannes Duns Scotus: Denker auf der Schwelle vom mittelalterlichen zum neuzeitlichen Denken* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2011).

⁷¹ Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge MA: Belknap Press, 2012).

We can conclude that the debate about the relationship between the theology of the Protestant Reformation and the various (late) medieval schools remains disputed on many levels. It is not served well by the methodological difficulties involved in the category of 'influence' and by the problems involved in defining some of its central terms like 'nominalism'. Those who consider the legacy of medieval theology and metaphysics as decisive for the development of modernity have moreover largely sidestepped the role of the Reformation in these developments.

My own methodological approach below aims to sidestep both the fraught nature of the term nominalism and the danger of assuming an all-too tight cause-effect relationship between medieval philosophical-theological schools and the theology of the Reformation. I equally wish to learn from Bouyer's approach, the main import of which is to consider the metaphysical commitments of Reformation theology. In particular, I wish to go beyond approaches which limit metaphysics to whatever is directly referred to by the Reformers as such, or can be traced backwards by way of direct historical 'influences'. This more general attention to broader metaphysical frameworks lends itself, as we have seen, to gaining a deeper understanding of the internal logic and complexity of the Reformation.

2) Implicit Metaphysics: On the Method and Architecture of this Study

The methodological approach which I propose for the present study is inspired by Bouyer, insofar as I propose to consider the metaphysical framework(s) sustaining Vermigli's thought. Instead of using 'nominalism' as a hermeneutic foil against which to read Vermigli's thought, however, I take my cue from the debates around the beginnings of modernity mentioned above. In particular, I proceed from the assumption that two of the most crucial metaphysical innovations of the middle ages were a univocal understanding of being, and an ensuing new notion of causality. I propose that understandings of being and of causality constitute a useful heuristic lens through which to read Reformation thought with a view for understanding its implied metaphysical frameworks.

Applying this lens means to pose the following question to any author or body of thought: is 'being' thought to be a neutral category, applying to both God's as well as created being, or is there a pre-eminent Divine Being in which all other being participates?

In the case of the latter, created being is fundamentally and ontologically dependent on God's being, and there are no pockets of reality where created beings stand or act autonomously. In the case of the former, God's being and the being of creation are envisaged to be on the same 'plane'. Either of these options affect the way in which the relation between Divine and human causation is understood, as Jacob Schmutz has shown.⁷² It will be useful briefly to review Schmutz' argument, as it provides some of the historical and conceptual background of the hermeneutical lens I propose to employ in studying Peter Martyr Vermigli.

Schmutz delineates how a new way of understanding God's influence in the world gradually emerged from the last decades of the thirteenth century onwards. Previously, Schmutz argues, actions of secondary causes were described under the aspect of their ontological dependence on the first cause. Thomas Aquinas, for instance, held that "in all things God Himself is properly the cause of universal being which is innermost in all things," and that because of this "in all things God works intimately."⁷³ This idea, viz. that God acts immediately in and through creatures, has also been described as a divine-human synergy. However, this synergy was gradually challenged and replaced by a concept of God's mediated concurrence: "actions of secondary causes are no longer described under the aspect of their dependence on the first cause, but under the aspect of their own proper order, to which the divine first causality will be able to come and freely join."⁷⁴ This constitutes, according to Schmutz, the emergence of a new model of causality, which is based on the reciprocal concurrence of two causes called partial. The earlier model, by contrast, was based on two subordinated but total causes.

"A decisive characteristic of this shift," Schmutz expounds, "is the denial of an ontological determination: God acts in a permanent manner by *conserving* the action of secondary causes, but the *being* of the effect does not depend any longer on his own gift of being."⁷⁵ An important step towards de-ontologising Divine causality was John Duns

⁷² Jacob Schmutz, "The Medieval Doctrine of Causality and the Theology of Pure Nature (13th to 17th Centuries)," in *Surnaturel: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth-Century Thomistic Thought*, ed. Serge-Thomas Bonino (Ave Maria, Florida: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2009), 203–50, here 249. In what follows, I will refer to this translation of the original article which appeared in the *Revue Thomiste*: Jacob Schmutz, "La doctrine médiévale des causes et la théologie de la nature pure (XIIe-XVIIe siècles)," *Revue Thomiste* 101 (2001): 217–64.

⁷³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* I, q. 105, a. 5.

⁷⁴ Schmutz, "The Medieval Doctrine of Causality," 213.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* (highlights in the original).

Scotus' critique of Thomas Aquinas' position mentioned above. In direct opposition to Aquinas' teaching, that being is an effect of God, Scotus affirmed that since every composite effect can be generated by a created cause only by passing through the action of creatures, these creatures have to be considered themselves "givers of being."⁷⁶ For Scotus, the first cause therefore no longer has any ontological priority over the action performed by the secondary cause; rather the two enjoy a being that can be described univocally. Almost two decades before Schmutz, André de Muralt highlighted the importance of this seemingly small move.⁷⁷ Its ramifications for the various models of metaphysics as a discipline as developed in the Middle Ages have moreover been underlined by Olivier Boulnois.⁷⁸

Nevertheless, the fact that Scotus and his heirs considered primary and the secondary causes to operate on the same ontological level should not lead us to conclude that they regarded the two orders as completely equal. The primacy of the divine influence was still affirmed. Similarly, it was still asserted that the first cause produces the effect more universally than the secondary cause. According to Schmutz, the crucial difference between the older and the newer system of causal explanation is that in the newer framework, God's primary influence on the world is seen as 'general', in the sense that it is necessary for the conservation of the powers of human beings. As such, God's influence is moreover "strictly co-present or simultaneous" (*simul*) and without any "priority ... over the action performed by the secondary cause."⁷⁹ God as the first cause now lends his concurrence to the secondary causes that act in the world, thereby working as a simultaneous, concurring cause.⁸⁰

In short, the new order of causal explanation traced by Jacob Schmutz and others is made manifest by a new guiding difference: while the main difference was previously between the *giving* of being by the first cause, and its *specification* by the secondary

⁷⁶ Cf. John Duns Scotus, *Opus oxoniense* IV, dist. 1. Q. 1 § 7.

⁷⁷ André de Muralt, *L'enjeu de la philosophie médiévale: études thomistes, scotistes, occamiennes et grégoriennes* (Leiden: Brill, 1991), 32–36 et passim; André de Muralt, "La causalité aristotélicienne et la structure de pensée scotiste," *Dialectica* 47, no. 2–3 (1993): 121–41.

⁷⁸ Boulnois, *Métaphysiques rebelles*, cf. part II "structures."

⁷⁹ Schmutz, "The Medieval Doctrine of Causality," 214.

⁸⁰ This new understanding of God's influence in the world which led to the assertion that human beings can perform good acts by their own power, thereby only needing the general concurring help of God. This, moreover, was "the source of what has often been seen as the 'Pelagianism' of certain followers of Scotus and Ockham." (Cf. *Ibid.*, 217; 225.)

cause, “the new difference is between the order of general influence which necessarily and universally accompanies every natural action, and the order of special influence, unlinked from the former.”⁸¹ The new split was therefore between God’s *general* influence as that which accompanies every act of his creatures, on the one hand, and his *special* influence as that which he must voluntarily grant to go beyond what is naturally possible for human beings, on the other hand. This means that God’s influence is no longer seen as related to the being of the secondary cause (so that God works *in* them), but rather as concurring with them, in such a way that Divine and secondary agency both work *alongside* each other, contributing different but seamless elements to the same effect.

The same development happened in theories of knowledge. Henry of Ghent distinguished a “knowledge for which only the general influence is needed” from the kind of knowledge which needs “other lights: that of faith first of all, then the *lumen speciale* that allows only certain elect to see things in the divine exemplars but not in God himself, and finally the *lumen gloriae* to see God himself.”⁸² According to Schmutz, Henry thereby established a dissociation between the natural order sustained by a general influence, and the supernatural order sustained by a special influence. This moreover implies that in the framework of the natural order, a knowledge *ex puris naturalibus* becomes possible. From this, it is obvious why Schmutz’ thesis is relevant for the debate around whether there is anything like a purely natural desire for God, which was sparked by Henri de Lubac’s *Surnaturel*.⁸³

In the present study, I will focus on structures of being and causality, like the ones just described, as they present themselves in the work of Peter Martyr Vermigli. Each of the following chapters will analyse a relevant area of Vermigli’s thought (his doctrine of God in relation to his anthropology, his soteriology, his doctrine of the Eucharist, and his political theology), enquiring into the nature of these structures at work in them. Through this approach, I hope to unearth the metaphysical structures present in Vermigli’s

⁸¹ Ibid., 218.

⁸² Ibid., 219.

⁸³ For a good overview of the debate, see: Serge-Thomas Bonino, *Surnaturel: A Controversy at the Heart of Twentieth-Century Thomistic Thought* (Ave Maria, Florida: Sapientia Press of Ave Maria University, 2009). Two notable recent contributions to the debate (which is still ongoing) are: Lawrence Feingold, *The Natural Desire to See God according to St. Thomas Aquinas and His Interpreters* (Rome: Apollinare, 2001); Steven A. Long, *Natura Pura: On the Recovery of Nature in the Doctrine of Grace* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2010).

thought. This means that my approach proceeds not so much by studying direct historical influences on Vermigli, but is primarily interested in the underlying metaphysical structures manifest in his thought.

However, what do I mean by ‘metaphysical structures’? Metaphysics, as Aristotle has defined it, is the science of *being qua being*.⁸⁴ Put in a theological context, we might say that it is the study of how God’s being and the being of the world relate. I proceed from the assumption that there are two fundamental ways in which this relationship can be envisaged: either there is a qualitative difference between God’s and the world’s being, or there is no such qualitative difference, and being is understood univocally. Each of these alternatives gives rise to or manifests itself in a different metaphysical framework. The former is a framework where there are different intensities of being in a kind of hierarchy, with God’s pre-eminent being at the top; he gives being to everything else, and everything else in turn participates in him. The latter, a metaphysical framework based on the univocity of being, knows no hierarchy of being, and does not conceive of the relationship between God and the world in terms of participation. In such a framework, God is not present in everything through its very being, and this is why his relationship to the world is framed not in ontological terms, but in terms of his ‘general’ versus his ‘special’ influence, as we have seen above, where he sustains everything generally through his power, and then ‘breaks in’ for special deeds. Historically, a framework of metaphysical participation has been associated with various forms of Christian Neo-Platonism, whereas a univocal framework has been said by many to characterise modernity.⁸⁵ However, for the purpose of this study, I wish to employ the slightly stylised frameworks just described as a heuristic lens through which to study the metaphysics of Peter Martyr Vermigli. The historical nuances and backgrounds of each of them are therefore somewhat secondary. I will demonstrate how each of these metaphysical frameworks manifests itself in different conceptions of agency, gift, presence and authority. The chapters of this study will focus on each of these in turn.

I will enquire whether Vermigli’s theology *implicitly* understands ‘being’ as a neutral category, applying equally and univocally to God’s being and created being, or

⁸⁴ Aristotle, *Metaphysics* IV 1.

⁸⁵ E.g. Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*; Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*; Pfau, *Minding the Modern: Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions, and Responsible Knowledge*.

whether it conceives of Divine being as transcendent and pre-eminent, with all other being participating in it. These two basic metaphysical alternatives manifest themselves in different respective formulations of the relationship between Divine and human agency, the character of Divine gifts, the way in which God is thought to be present in the Church, and the way his power is envisaged.

It is the argument of each of the four chapters which follow, that Vermigli simultaneously inhabits and exhibits aspects of both the metaphysical frameworks we have just described. We will see how this is the case with regard to (1) Vermigli's view of the relation between Divine and human agency as developed in his lectures on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and the Old Testament books of Samuel, (2) his understanding of the gift of grace in justification, (3) his understanding of presence in the Eucharistic debates, and (4) his understanding of power and authority in his political theology.

In chapter one, I demonstrate that in his commentary on Aristotle's *Ethics* and in selected *scholia* from his Old Testament commentaries, Vermigli sometimes thinks of Divine agency as in synergy with human agency. This presupposes a participatory metaphysics, insofar as God is present in and through the creature's actions as the giver of existence. By contrast, other elements of Vermigli's thought – in the same sources – indicate that he construes God's influence as concurring with human actions, in such a way that Divine and human agency both work on the same ontological plane, contributing different but seamless elements to the same effect.

In chapter two, I contend that another upshot of this metaphysical plurality can be seen in Vermigli's theology of justification, specifically in the way he envisages the gift of grace to be given. If it is given in such a way that it intrinsically transforms human beings, then this presupposes a framework of metaphysical participation. The same is not the case when gifts are given extrinsically. I demonstrate that Vermigli holds both theses. He insists that human beings can receive the gift of grace only extrinsically (through imputation), while he equally maintains that this gift transforms them intrinsically.

Chapter three considers Vermigli at his most polemical: in the debates on the Eucharist. I argue that in this context, Vermigli's fundamental category with which to describe the relationship between God and the world is that of spatial nearness and distance. The fact that he takes recourse to spatial terms in order to set apart God from the world (rather than different qualities of being) indicates a univocal understanding of

Divine and created being. Nevertheless, Vermigli's conception of the believer's union with Christ, which is at the heart of his teaching on the Eucharist, presupposes that the believer participates in Christ.

The fourth and final chapter argues that the two focal points of authority in Vermigli's political theology – the magistrate and the word of God – do not function in the same way, rather that each presupposes a different metaphysical framework. Vermigli teaches that magistrates mediate God's power and authority. This mediation implies a hierarchical metaphysics in which God is not only the pre-eminent giver of power but also of being. However, this stands in contrast to the way Vermigli envisages the authority of the Word of God. In the case of his Word, Vermigli maintains, God's power needs no mediation. This denial of mediation conveys that God and the world are seen on the same ontological plane.

The approach of this study is therefore based on studying the metaphysical framework *implicit* in Vermigli's work, insofar as it does not study works which explicitly deal with the nature of *being qua being* – simply because Peter Martyr Vermigli's oeuvre does not comprise any explicit metaphysical reflections. This approach opens the novel possibility to analyse the metaphysics of theologians such as Peter Martyr Vermigli, who have written much concerning classically 'doctrinal' problems, but have not addressed metaphysics in the abstract.

However, one might object to such an approach that it forcefully imposes categories on the Reformation which are foreign or extraneous to its discourse. Rarely did the Reformers overtly engage in metaphysical questions, after all. Indeed, it is well known that Luther, for instance, explicitly disapproved of anything that smacked of scholasticism, with what he would call metaphysical speculation certainly falling under this verdict.⁸⁶ Some might therefore say, as David C. Steinmetz did in the case of Calvin, that "historians who attempt to reconstruct Calvin's metaphysics from his collected works have set themselves a nearly impossible task" because he "set out to write a theology that was wholly exegetical."⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Most famously perhaps, Luther, in his 1517 *Disputation against Scholastic Theology*, goes as far as to argue that no syllogistic form is valid in theology (WA 1.222-228).

⁸⁷ David C. Steinmetz, "The Scholastic Calvin," in *Protestant Scholasticism: Essays in Reassessment*, ed. Carl R. Trueman and R. Scott Clark (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 25.

However, to say that the Reformers had no metaphysics at all because their work was wholly exegetical, would be to close our eyes to one dimension of their work. A similar argument, namely that genuinely ‘biblical’ or ‘theological’ reflection can do away with metaphysics, has sometimes been made in theology, especially after Adolf von Harnack’s thesis of an ‘undue’ Hellenization of Christianity.⁸⁸ There are important and varied voices who have spoken up against this, and their arguments apply *mutatis mutandis* to our study as well: Hans Boersma has held that most of the Christian Tradition has been “quite conscious of the fact that there is no such thing as a universally accessible, neutral ontology [or metaphysics] separate from the very particular convictions of the Christian faith.”⁸⁹ Together with others,⁹⁰ he has therefore called for more conscious attention to the metaphysics implicit in contemporary (Protestant) theology, because theological reflection perforce involves assumptions about knowledge, language and the transcendent, which, unless made explicit, are likely to be ‘modern’ or ‘nihilist’ rather than Christian.⁹¹ A similar case for the importance of metaphysics has been made in Catholic theology in John Paul II’s encyclical *Fides et Ratio*. Metaphysics, John Paul II insisted, “plays an essential role of mediation in theological research,” since it allows theology to move beyond an analysis of religious experience, and “give a coherent account of the ... value of revealed truth.” Indeed, it is the “path to be taken in order to move beyond the crisis pervading large sectors of philosophy at the moment,” such as nihilism.⁹²

This would mean that for theologians to investigate historical sources, they ought to go beyond limiting their enquiry to texts called ‘*De metaphysica*’ (or similarly) only. For even if one does limit one’s enquiry to such texts, where they exist, the metaphysics implicit in them is almost equally as important as the metaphysical tenets which they explicitly affirm or deny. A good example for this is an article by Richard Muller, in which

⁸⁸ Adolf von Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 3 vols. (Freiburg i.B.: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1886).

⁸⁹ Hans Boersma, *Heavenly Participation: The Weaving of a Sacramental Tapestry* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2011), 21.

⁹⁰ Cf. e.g. Paul Tyson, *Returning to Reality: Christian Platonism for Our Times* (Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2014); James K. A. Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Baker Academic, 2009).

⁹¹ Cf. Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 20.

⁹² John Paul II, “*Fides et Ratio*,” September 14, 1998, section 83, http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_jp-ii_enc_14091998_fides-et-ratio.html (10.02.2017).

he argues that early modern Reformed thought was “not Scotist.”⁹³ He makes this claim by drawing on Reformed metaphysical treatises of the second half of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century. He convincingly demonstrates that the vast majority of Reformed metaphysical treatises of the second half of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century did not subscribe to the univocity of being. He shows that a wide variety of positions was being held, from an explicitly analogical doctrine of the names of God (Zanchi, Hyperius), to assertions that God is “supra ens” (Keckermann) and concomitant denials of univocity, up to a number of theologians opting in favour of an outright equivocity of being (Crankanthorpe, Maresius, Revius). All this leads Muller to conclude *pace* John Milbank, Catherine Pickstock and Brad Gregory, that it “cannot be sustained” that “early modern Protestant thought evidenced a ‘shift’ away from a ‘metaphysics of participation’.”⁹⁴ However, the evidence Muller himself presents is far from clear on this issue. Muller demonstrates that the interest behind the early modern Reformed denial of the univocity of being is to distinguish between “the disciplines of theology and metaphysics.” Indeed, “Reformed writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ... rather strictly separated ‘general metaphysics’ from ‘special metaphysics’.”⁹⁵ Therefore, they denied the univocity of being in order to “exclude discussion of God” from general metaphysics, “on the ground that God ought not to be considered as ‘being in general’.”⁹⁶ As Oliver Boulnois has shown, however, the distinction between a general and a special metaphysics was introduced by John Duns Scotus. It was through Scotus that a general or transcendental metaphysics became a necessary pre-condition for thinking about God in the *metaphysica specialis*.⁹⁷ Moreover, the distinction between theology and metaphysics – or between God’s being and being in general – bespeaks a metaphysical framework which is certainly not based on all things participating in God’s being. Muller’s claim that early modern Reformed writers were “not Scotist” is therefore not as straightforward. True, they denied the univocity of being. This does not mean, however, that they

⁹³ Richard A. Muller, “Not Scotist: Understandings of Being, Univocity, and Analogy in Early Modern Reformed Thought,” *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 14, no. 2 (2012): 127–50.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 146.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ “Surtout, chez lui [Scot], la *metaphysica transcendens* est devenue une démarche antérieure et nécessaire à la *metaphysica specialis*, c’est-à-dire que l’ontologie est une condition de possibilité de la théologie transcendantale. Cette articulation restera la structure porteuse de l’histoire de la métaphysique, de Suarez à Kant.” (Boulnois, *Métaphysiques rebelles*, 310.)

necessarily inhabited a metaphysics of participation. Quite to the contrary, their distinction between a general and a special metaphysics indicates that they were very much part of a tradition which began with Scotus and culminated in Kant.

All of this goes to show that even when studying explicitly metaphysical tracts, what is implicit in them is at least as important as what they explicitly say. I am therefore convinced that in order to do justice to the question of what metaphysics a person holds, one must cast the net wider than a consideration of only explicitly metaphysical treatises, and enquire into the metaphysics *implied* in their thought. This also makes it possible to investigate the metaphysical framework of thinkers who did not leave behind explicitly metaphysical treatises, such as Peter Martyr Vermigli. However, before starting our exegesis, it will be useful to touch briefly on who Peter Martyr Vermigli was, on what and how he wrote. To this task I now turn, leaving a review of secondary literature on Vermigli's theology for the relevant chapters of the main body of this study below.

3) Peter Martyr Vermigli: Life and Work

Much is known about Vermigli's life, not least because of the work of Josiah Simler, Vermigli's successor as professor of Old Testament in Zurich. Simler gave the eulogy at Vermigli's funeral and later expanded and published it.⁹⁸ More recently, Philip McNair has researched the first forty-two years of Vermigli's life in great detail, mostly confirming Simler's account.⁹⁹ What follows is based on these two sources, as well as on other biographical research on Vermigli's life.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Josiah Simler, *Oratio de vita et obitu viri optimi, praestantissimi Theologi D. Petri Martyris Vermiglii, Sacrarum literarum in Schola Tigurina Professoris* (Zurich: Froschauer, 1563). For a modern translation, see Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Life, Letters, and Sermons*, trans. John Patrick Donnelly, The Peter Martyr Library 5 (Kirksville MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1999), 9–62.

⁹⁹ McNair, *Peter Martyr in Italy: Anatomy of Apostasy*.

¹⁰⁰ Marvin W. Anderson, *Peter Martyr, A Reformer in Exile (1542-1562): A Chronology of Biblical Writings in England and Europe* (Nieuwkoop: De Graaf, 1975); W. J. Torrance Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 12–21; Joseph C. McLelland, "Italy: Religious and Intellectual Ferment," in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank A. James (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 25–33; R. Gerald Hobbs, "Strasbourg: Vermigli and the Senior School," in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank A. James (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 35–69; Charlotte Methuen, "Oxford: Reading Scripture in the University," in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank A. James (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 71–93; Emidio Campi, "Zurich: Professor in the Schola Tigurina," in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank A. James (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 95–114. On Vermigli's last years in Zurich, Baumann's work is moreover

Vermigli was born 8 September 1499 into the senatorial aristocracy of Florence. Given that his birthday coincides with the Feast of the Birth of the Virgin Mary, he was called Piero Mariano. His mother taught him Latin from an early age, and at age 15, the young Vermigli was sent a short distance up the hill from his home to the Augustinian canons of Fiesole. Four years later, he took his vows in the same order, choosing the name Pietro Martire after Saint Peter Martyr of Verona, who was allegedly killed defending the orthodox faith against Manicheans in 1252. Soon after, he went to the University of Padua, where he was immersed in studies of Greek and the liberal arts. Around 1525 he was ordained to the priesthood, before being elected a public preacher of the Lateran Congregation. This led him to travel all over Italy. Being required to preach on the scriptures of both Testaments, he applied himself to the study of Hebrew, aided by a Jewish physician. In 1530, he was appointed Deputy Prior of his order of S. Giovanni in Monte in Bologna. Three years later, he was promoted to become Abbot of Spoleto, before being transferred to be Prior of the College of S. Pietro ad Aram in Naples in 1537. In Naples, he met the Spanish mystic Juan de Valdés, and it was there that he also began reading works by Martin Bucer, Huldrych Zwingli, and Desiderius Erasmus. In 1541, he was named prior of the monastery of San Frediano in Lucca.

However, in 1542, accusations of heresy were levelled directly against Vermigli from Rome. His situation became so untenable that left Italy in the same year. His first stop was Zurich, where Heinrich Bullinger received the refugee warmly, but could not offer him a position. Shortly thereafter, Martin Bucer invited him to become professor of Hebrew at Strasbourg. Over the next five years of his stay at Strasbourg, he lectured on the Twelve Minor Prophets, Genesis, Exodus, much of Leviticus and Lamentations. Based on these lectures, he later published commentaries to the books of Genesis and Lamentations.

In Strasbourg Vermigli moreover met Catherine Dammartin, a former nun from Metz. Following the example of Luther and Martin Bucer, he took the position that marriage was an honourable position for a priest, and the two got married. After five years as professor at Strasbourg, Vermigli's reputation as a teacher and leading theologian of

excellent: Michael Baumann, "Petrus Martyr Vermigli in Zürich (1556-1662): Dieser Kylchen in der heiligen gschrift professor und laeser" (PhD thesis, University of Zurich, 2010).

Introduction

the reform had grown to such an extent that both he and his host Bucer were jointly invited by King Edward VI through the offices of Archbishop Thomas Cranmer to take up senior positions at Oxford and Cambridge respectively. Both were appointed to the prestigious Regius chairs in Divinity.

Once installed in Oxford in early 1548, Vermigli began to lecture on Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, and soon became embroiled in a bitter dispute over the doctrine of the Eucharist. His initial opponent was the conservative Richard Smith, who had been sacked from the Regius chair to make way for Vermigli. Smith, however, was not part of the formal debate which ensued. The so-called Oxford disputation on the Eucharist of 1549 became an event of national significance, and Vermigli was formally declared its winner. He continued his teaching in Oxford by lecturing on Romans, from which would eventually ensue his Romans commentary. Vermigli counselled Cranmer on important aspects of the 1552 Book of Common Prayer, and was also made part of the working group which was to revise the Canon Law of England. Together with the Oxford disputation, these are perhaps the most important theological contributions Vermigli made during his time on the British Isles.

Vermigli's wife Catherine died after eight years of marriage and was buried in Oxford. Her remains subsequently became subject of confessional animosities. During Mary's reign, Cardinal Pole had her body exhumed and cast on a dung heap. After 1558, an ecclesial commission had her remains reinterred in the same grave as the relics of St. Frithuswith in Christ Church Cathedral, in a move which aimed both at suppressing St. Frithuswith's cult, and at preventing any further disturbance of Catherine's remains. To this day, the two unlike women still share one grave.

At the death of Edward VI, Vermigli had to leave the country, and returned to teaching in Strasbourg in late 1553. He lectured on the book of Judges during this second stay in Strasbourg, lectures which he would eventually publish a year before his death. He equally lectured on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Moreover, he wrote a lengthy reply on Cranmer's behalf to Stephen Gardiner's attack on the Archbishop's *Treatise on the Lord's Supper*. But even within Strasbourg, there were now quarrels about how to understand the Eucharist, namely between the Lutheran established party and a Reformed minority – the side of which Vermigli took. When he received an invitation to teach as a professor of Hebrew at the *Schola Tigurina*, this controversy made it easy for

Vermigli to accept. He arrived in Zurich in July 1556. This was going to be his last move, for even though he was invited by Calvin to take up an appointment at the Geneva Academy, and by Elizabeth I to return to his Regius Chair at Oxford, he declined.

During these years in Zurich, he lectured on the books of Samuel and Kings – lectures which were posthumously published as commentaries. He also married a second time: Catharina Merenda, a young Italian lady from a wealthy family who – being a Protestant – had lived in the Genevan exile before. In the three years of their marriage, Catharina bore Vermigli three children, two of which died as infants. The third, Maria Vermilia, was born only after the death of her father, and was Vermigli's only surviving offspring.

Vermigli represented the Zurich church at the Colloquy of Poissy in 1561, convoked by Catherine de Medici, the regent of France, in the hope of bringing about a peaceful resolution to the religious differences in France. In the key disputation of the Colloquy, once again concerning the Eucharist, Vermigli took the lead among the Protestant representatives. The Colloquy did not reach its intended result, and after returning to Zurich, Vermigli's health started to deteriorate. He died on 12 November 1562 and was buried in the cloister of the Grossmünster.

The most impressive index of Vermigli's influence as a theological writer is the wide diffusion of his books. Donnelly counted that in the hundred years after Vermigli left Italy, there were about 110 separate printings of his writings.¹⁰¹ By far the most influential of Vermigli's works was the *Loci Communes*, which, however, he did not directly compose himself. The *Loci Communes* are a posthumously completed compilation of the more systematic passages of Vermigli's Biblical commentaries, so-called *scholia* or *loci*. These *scholia* are the most striking feature of Vermigli's biblical commentaries. Whenever the biblical text raised – for him – a theological or ethical subject, he would digress from the verse-by-verse exegesis into a *scholium*. They are systematic tracts, some of which are merely a paragraph long, while others develop into full treatises (such as the treatises on justification and predestination in the Romans commentary).

Robert Masson (Robert le Maçon, 1534/5–1611), the minister of the French congregation in London, collected the *scholia* from all of Vermigli's biblical commentaries

¹⁰¹ Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace*, 171.

and some of his more polemical works, arranged them, and published them as the *Loci Communes*. He took Calvin's *Institutes* as a model for his compilation.¹⁰² The first edition of the influential *Loci Communes* appeared in 1576.¹⁰³ In the fifty years following the first edition, there were thirteen more printings of the *Loci* at London, Basel, Zurich, Geneva, and Heidelberg. The final printing came at Amsterdam in 1656.¹⁰⁴ In his *Epistola Nuncupatoria* of the first edition of the *Loci*, Masson writes that Vermigli was not averse to the idea of gathering a commonplace book out of his commentaries when it was suggested to him during his lifetime, but he replied that he might do it when he got the time.¹⁰⁵ Vermigli's *Loci Communes* are of paramount importance for understanding the history of his influence.¹⁰⁶ Given that he did not compose this work himself, however, in what follows, I will refer to the *scholia* in their context of the biblical commentaries, rather than citing the *Loci Communes*.

As Donnelly rightly observes, the *scholia* in Vermigli's commentaries represent a desire for systematic development that was impossible in his usual line-by-line exegesis.¹⁰⁷ Like Luther, Vermigli thought that the text of the Scriptures should replace Lombard's *Sentences* or the various *Summae* as the prime source from which theology should be taught. Yet, as Donnelly puts it, Vermigli's "introduction of the *scholia*, the massive interjection of systematic theological tracts into the exegesis of the biblical text,

¹⁰² Christoph Strohm has analysed the similarities in great detail. See Christoph Strohm, "Petrus Martyr Vermigli's *Loci Communes* und Calvin's *Institutio Christianae Religionis*," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism, Republicanism, Reformation*, ed. Emidio Campi (Genève: Droz, 2002), 77–104. The argument has been made that Calvin's *Institutes* themselves are a compilation of theological *loci* and *disputationes*, which goes to show the prevalence of this form, cf. Elsie Anne McKee and Brian G. Armstrong, "Exegesis, Theology, and Development in Calvin's *Institutio*: A Methodological Suggestion," in *Probing the Reformed Tradition: Historical Studies in Honor of Edward A. Dowey* (Louisville, Ky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989), 154–72.

¹⁰³ Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (London: John Kingston, 1576).

¹⁰⁴ Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace*, 172.

¹⁰⁵ "Sic enim ab Ioanne Gravella, viro integerrimo, fidelissimo Ecclesiae Dei pastore, et mihi amicissimo homine, accepi: quo tempore D. P. Martyris domesticus, una cum aliis multis eius consuetudine et colloquiis frueretur, ab illo quaesitum aliquando fuisse, quare locos communes uno volumine collectos, edendos non curaret: hoc enim Ecclesiae Dei fore utilius, et a piis quibusque magnopere desiderari. Tum iis quae dicta fuerant annuisse, idque si per otium liceret, se aliquando facturum recipisse." (Vermigli, *Loci Communes*, epistola nuncupatoria, sine pagina.)

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Joseph C. McLelland, "A Literary History of the *Loci Communes*," in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank A. James (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 479–94; Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace*, esp. chapter seven "The Influence of Martyr's Thought."

¹⁰⁷ Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace*, 60.

was basically subversive of Luther's program for theological education."¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the *scholia* essentially amount to "an implicit confession that the theological process must go beyond an exposition of the Bible text."¹⁰⁹ They manifest both Vermigli's desire for systematic exposition of theological questions raised by the text of the Scriptures, and his wish to give his lectures greater relevance to the ministerial students before him. Especially in the case of his Old Testament commentaries, this seems to be the case. There, he frequently addresses theological, ethical, or pastoral questions, which arise from the Old Testament narratives. A good example for all three of these categories is found in the second book of Samuel, when David's son Absalom publicly sleeps with his father's wives (2 Sam 16:22). Here, Vermigli raises the fundamental question whether God can be said the author of this sin. For not only had David been cursed in the name of the Lord just before this incidence (2 Sam 16:5-12) and recognised that the curse came from God (2 Sam 16:10); the prophet Nathan had also predicted the debasement of David's wives, stating that it was the Lord's will as a punishment for Uriah's murder (2 Sam 12:11). All this leads Vermigli to a lengthy excursus about the origin of sin, and whether God is causally implied in it (we will return to this *scholium* in chapter one).

Having introduced Peter Martyr Vermigli, and the method and scope of this dissertation, let us now turn to our examination of the metaphysical structures implied in his work. We shall begin by focussing on Vermigli's view of the interplay between Divine and human agency.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 63.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 64.

Chapter One: Divine and Human Agency and the Workings of Causality

The subject matter of this chapter is the way in which Vermigli envisages the interplay between Divine and human causality, and the metaphysical implications which this carries. As seen in the introduction, this topic is pertinent to the various ways in which God's influence in the world can be envisaged. However, because Vermigli never reflected on this issue in the abstract or in a single treatise, I will not start out from a clearly defined set of texts of his oeuvre – in contrast to the three following chapters. Instead, I have chosen to focus mainly on two of his commentaries, namely on the books of Samuel, and on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*.¹ They both stem from lectures delivered late in Vermigli's life (between 1553 and 1558). From the *Samuel* commentary, we will focus on two kinds of *scholia*: Vermigli's reflections on providence, and his comments on the question of how God is – or rather, is not – implicated in sinful actions. Both these theological *loci* are pertinent to the ways in which Vermigli believes God to work in creatures, and how human and Divine agency relate. The *Ethics* commentary lends itself to our topic because of its characteristic comparisons between “philosophy” and “the Scriptures” in which Vermigli is explicit about the way he believes God to work in the world and in human beings. Where appropriate, I will moreover draw on *scholia* from Vermigli's *1-2 Kings* commentary (dating from lectures delivered in Zurich between 1556 and 1558)² and the *Romans* commentary, which Vermigli finished for publication in the same period (it was first printed in 1558), even though he lectured on it while in Oxford.³

Vermigli's commentary on the two books of Samuel was published posthumously, appearing in 1564. It dates from lectures which he delivered between his arrival in Zurich in mid-1556 and mid-1558.⁴ The first and the last of its *scholia* are concerned with the

¹ Pietro Martire Vermigli, *In duos libros Samuelis prophetae qui vulgo priores libri Regum appellantur ... commentarii* ... (Zurich: Froschauer, 1564); Pietro Martire Vermigli, *In primum, secundum, et initium tertii libri Ethiocorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum ... commentarius* (Zurich: Froschauer, 1563).

² Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Melachim, id est, Regum libri duo posteriores cum Commentariis* (Zurich: Ch. Froschauer, 1566).

³ Pietro Martire Vermigli, *In Epistolam S. Pauli Ad Romanos ... Commentarii Doctissimi* (Basel: P. Perna, 1558).

⁴ Baumann, “Petrus Martyr Vermigli in Zürich (1556-1662),” 178.

same theme, namely, the question as to whether God is the author of sin. This is hardly a coincidence, and shows how central this topic is to Vermigli's thinking in this commentary. We shall see how this question arises naturally from his thinking on God's providence, which features in another *scholium* of the same commentary. These *scholia* will in turn be the topic of the first section below.

Vermigli's commentary on Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* originates from lectures he held during his second stay in Strasbourg (1553-1556). After the second chapter of the third book, Vermigli's commentary ends, due to his relocation to Zurich. In all probability, he did not intend for these lectures to be published, and it was not until 1563, one year after his death, that they were printed.⁵ Vermigli's former colleagues in Zurich had arranged for their publication, because they deemed the commentary – though unfinished – to be “an almost perfect example of interpreting philosophy.”⁶ Luca Baschera has dedicated an entire monograph to this commentary, its context and its sources.⁷ We will focus on selected passages from this commentary in the second section below.

We shall see that the relevant questions with regard to understanding the relationship between Divine and human agency converge on whether God acts *in* human beings through a kind of synergy, or whether He works *alongside* human beings. More specifically, is God's influence seen as ontological in character, to the extent that God as the giver of existence is present with the creature's actions insofar as they exist; or is God's influence seen as concurring with human actions, in such a way that Divine and human agency both contribute different but seamless elements to the same effect? A variation of this question arises in noetics, which will be the focus of section three: is God's work in human acts of insight to be understood as God acting *in* human understanding,

⁵ A contemporary edition of this text is available: Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik des Aristoteles*, ed. Luca Baschera and Christian Moser (Leiden: Brill, 2011). I will refer to this edition for all Latin references. For the benefit of the reader, I will equally refer to the following English translation: Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. Emidio Campi and Joseph C. McLelland (Kirksville MO: Truman State University Press, 2006).

⁶ From Giulio Santerenziano's *Praefatio*: “Addebant haec commentaria imperfecta praebere nihilo minus pene perfectum exemplar interpretandi philosophiam.” (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 40.)

⁷ Luca Baschera, *Tugend und Rechtfertigung: Peter Martyr Vermiglis Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik im Spannungsfeld von Philosophie und Theologie* (Zürich: TVZ, 2008). Similarly: Luca Baschera, “Aristotle and Scholasticism,” in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank A. James (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 133–60.

enlightening their reason from within, or is he rather thought to add another piece to the puzzle of insight, hence working *alongside* human understanding?

The aim of this chapter is to demonstrate that there are crucial tensions in the way in which Vermigli envisages the interplay of Divine and human agency and the workings of complex causalities. As we shall see, Vermigli's notion of providence implies a relationship between God and creation which is determined ontologically, and is based on a framework of metaphysical participation, according to which God works *in* his creatures. This unified picture is broken, however, in the context of his reflections on the effect of the Fall, such as for instance in the *Ethics* commentary. Here, Vermigli envisages a two-tiered model of Divine agency in its interplay with human action in which one can distinguish God's general influence from his special influence. When taken together, both of these frameworks suggest, as I shall argue, that Vermigli inhabits two different metaphysical frameworks.

1) Providence and God's Work in the World in the *Samuel* Commentary

1 Samuel 9 and 10 narrates how Samuel anoints Saul, and how he gives him a series of signs which will be fulfilled before he is made king: he will meet two men near Rachel's tomb, who will tell him about lost donkeys (1 Sam 10:2), before meeting three men at the great tree of Tabor who will offer him two loaves of bread (1 Sam 10:3). These signs are fulfilled exactly, and this leads Vermigli to interject: "since these events are said to be so certain, surely we can see that even the smallest works, as well as our decisions, depend on the providence of God and are guided and arranged by him, although to us they often seem to be mere chance." This is the start of a longer *scholium* on God's providence.⁸

First of all, Vermigli argues that there is such a providence. His main reason for this is that God is "author and creator of all, and can do nothing without deliberation; he has his own certain and firm reasons in himself."⁹ If any artisan has a plan by which to fashion

⁸ "Iam vero, quoniam haec ita certo dicuntur eventura, videre possumus omnia etiam minutissima opera et consilia nostra pendere a providential Dei, et ab eo regi et ordinari, quamvis nobis saepe fortuita esse videantur." (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 56r. The *scholium* has been translated in volume four of the Peter Martyr Library: Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Philosophical Works: On the Relation of Philosophy to Theology*, trans. Joseph C. McLelland, The Peter Martyr Library 4 (Kirkville MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1996), 182.)

⁹ "Cum Deus sit author et conditor omnium rerum, nihil autem possit temere facere, sed suas habeat apud se certas et constitutas rationes." (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 56v; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 184.)

his or her creation, how much more has the creator of everything a reason for what and how he is creating, Vermigli argues. Indeed, “the heavenly spheres, the stars, the firmament, air, water, heat, cold – so many forms and changes of things contrary and hostile to one another – would fall in ruins unless sustained by some ruler.”¹⁰ Therefore, Vermigli defines providence as “the power or faculty of God by which he directs all things and brings them to their ends.”¹¹ Providence is therefore God’s guidance of all things to their proper ends, both in that God knows these ends, and in that he has the power to bring them about. Indeed, the final cause of providence is, for Vermigli, “that everything may attain its own end and redound to the glory of God.”¹² Vermigli insists that *all things* are subject to providence, for “if God has made all things, nothing can be outside of his providence.” Indeed, if something “were outside his providence it would be outside creation, too.”¹³ It is therefore the doctrine of creation which leads Vermigli to stress the unity of God’s providential workings in the world.

Taking one step back from this, let us ask: what is the nature of God’s agency in the world, as presupposed by Vermigli’s doctrine of providence? First, let us note that God’s agency in the world through providence is all-encompassing. Nothing is outside providence, for Vermigli, precisely because there is nothing that is not created. God’s governing providence applies indiscriminatingly to all of God’s creation; there are no spheres to which it applies less intensely than to others. Secondly, this connection between creation and providence indicates that everything, by its very being, is dependent on God. Put differently, this means that there is an ontological dependence of everything on God. Both this and the all-encompassing nature of providence indicates that there is a participatory metaphysical framework at work here.

This is moreover confirmed by an explicit comment Vermigli makes on the nature of God’s causality. Vermigli rejects the idea that “God made all things and afterwards cast

¹⁰ “Certe coelestes orbes, sydera, aether, aer, aqua, calor, frigus, tot vicissitudines et mutations rerum inter se contrariarum et pugnantium, nisi ab aliquot rectore sustinerentur, ruerent.” (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 56v; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 184.)

¹¹ “Est enim vis seu facultas Dei, qua res omnes dirigit et adducit ad fines suos.” (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 56v; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 185.)

¹² “Finalis vero causa est, ut omnia assequantur fines suos et cedant in gloriam Dei.” (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 57r; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 186.)

¹³ “Deus omnia condidit, nihil certe ab eius providential eximendum est. Nam si quid ab eius providential eximeretur, id etiam eximeretur a creatione.” (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 57r; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 187.)

them aside.”¹⁴ He equally rejects the opinion that God works through a merely “common” influence. For him, this would seem to reduce the scope of God’s governance. The passage is worth quoting in full:

We should not heed those who say that while it is true that God rules all things, it is nothing else but supplying that common influence which everything draws into itself. This makes God the ruler and governor of the universe not in reality but in name only. If everything bends and applies that common influence of God in its own way, then God follows the nature of created things.¹⁵

The *influxus communis*, as Vermigli understands it, is God offering his direction to all things, but in such a way that the things themselves appropriate it in their own way. This, however, is not enough for Vermigli. He is not willing to concede that God has only this kind of influence, as he believes that it would unduly diminish God’s governance of his creation, and indeed ascribe too much to creation. (This is moreover partly why Vermigli holds such a strong doctrine of predestination. I cannot discuss this detail in the present context. Suffice to say that predestination is a part of Vermigli’s doctrine of providence, insofar as it touches salvation.¹⁶) Therefore, according to Vermigli’s doctrine of providence, God’s influence must be envisaged as more intimate than by means of a general influence, which can be inflected and potentially overcome by the creatures receiving it. This indicates that Vermigli envisages an influence of God that is stronger than a merely general one and that there are no pockets of reality which are outside of a fundamental dependence on him.

More detailed reflections on the interplay of Divine and human causality can be found in the Samuel commentary in the two *scholia* on whether God is the author of sin.

¹⁴ “Quidam somniant Deum omnia quidam condidisse postea vero condita reliquisse.” (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 57r; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 186.)

¹⁵ “Nec audiendi sunt, qui dicunt Deum omnia quidem regere, verum id non aliud esse quam rebus omnibus commune influxum suppeditare, quem res singulae ad se attrahant. Hoc enim est, Deum non re ipsa, sed tantum nomine orbis rectorem et moderatorem facere. Nam si res quaeque pro ingenio suo inflectat et accommodet ad se commune illum influxum Dei, Deus squitur naturam rerum creatarum.” (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 57r; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 186.)

¹⁶ On Vermigli’s doctrine of predestination, see Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification: Two Theological Loci*, ed. Frank A. James (Kirksville MO: Truman State University Press, 2003); Joachim Staedtke, “Der Zürcher Prädestinationsstreit von 1560,” *Zwingliana* 9 (1949): 536–46; James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination: The Augustinian Inheritance of an Italian Reformer*; Luca Baschera, “Independent Yet Harmonious: Some Remarks on the Relationship between the Theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) and John Calvin,” *Church History and Religious Culture* 91, no. 1–2 (January 1, 2011): 43–57.

This question is intimately connected to the doctrine of providence, as it seems to be raised as an objection against it. For if God's providence governs everything in the way we have just seen, then does this not mean that he also governs all sin? Vermigli's short answer to this question is that "God is not by himself and properly the cause of sin," but that equally "nothing in the world happens, not even sins themselves, without his will and choice or providence."¹⁷ His explication of this thesis, however, is intricate, roundabout and long-winded. We will, in what follows, focus only on those parts of it which are most directly concerned with the interplay between Divine and human agency and ask what metaphysical framework they imply.

First of all, Vermigli distinguishes between God as the first cause and human beings as secondary causes. Vermigli holds that God is "pure act (as the philosophers say) or fire, as it is said in the scriptures" and that he therefore "constantly urges everything, moves and arouses."¹⁸ Whatever happens is produced not only by inferior or secondary causes, but also flows from God, the first efficient cause. Still, God causes each object to act according to its nature and preserves the integrity of secondary causes: "But even though the motor of all things is in God, nonetheless individuals are moved out of their own nature's principles."¹⁹ This distinction serves Vermigli for the claim that God's moving as the first mover can be taken up differently: when God causes something or someone good to act, they move with a good act; however, when the nature of the secondary cause is bad or depraved, then the movement that God prompts leads to a corrupt act. Crucially, however, he holds that "the malice of [the secondary cause] is not to be referred to the first and highest cause," rather, it should be "applied to the guilt of the corruption of the principle of the individual, from which it proceeds."²⁰ Whatever evil there is in an action, Vermigli holds, must therefore be attributed not to the highest cause but to the secondary causes effecting it. Because Vermigli explicitly holds that evil is a privation,²¹ however, this

¹⁷ "Deum non esse per se et proprie causam peccati ... Nihil in mundo fieri, nec etiam peccata ipsa, praeter illius voluntatem et arbitrium seu providentiam." (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 277r. The longer of the two *Samuel scholia* is translated in volume four of the Peter Martyr Library, cf. Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 224.)

¹⁸ "Deum, cum sit (ut loquuntur philosophi) actus purus, vel ignis ut in sarcris literis habetur ... omnia perpetuo incitat, movet et impellit." (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 20r.)

¹⁹ "Sed quamvis motus rerum omnium sit a Deo, attamen singula etiam ex naturae suae principiis movetur." (Ibid.)

²⁰ "Neque ad altissima et primam causam malitia eius motus est referenda, verum ad singularia principia corruptioni obnoxia, unde profectus est, accommodabitur." (Ibid.)

²¹ "Malum est privatio, boni inquam, nec boni cuiusvis." (Ibid., 276v.)

does not mean that secondary causes ‘introduce’ anything which has an independent standing outside of God’s influence. Rather, they somehow insert ‘a nothing’ into those actions which are evil.

Nevertheless, does this not mean that God still works seamlessly with the work of sinners? To this objection, Vermigli answers that the particular effect “comes quite differently from the superior good cause than from the proximate cause which is corrupt.” Insofar as the effect is “infected by the depravity of the devil and of evil men,” it is evil. However, insofar as “God, the supreme and best cause, concurs with these actions, he does them with righteousness and order.”²² Underlying this is Vermigli’s view of fallen human beings to which we will return in the next section. He believes that in their depravity, human beings have a propensity ‘automatically’ to do the wrong thing, unless God prevents them from sinning.²³ In short, Vermigli holds that God, as the superior cause, remains good and righteous, even if the corruption of the secondary cause leads to evil acts.

But how does Vermigli envisage this complex interplay between the two causes? Does he conceive of a competition between them, such that the secondary cause wins out over the primary cause? It does not seem so, for Vermigli goes on to clarify what it means that an act is brought forth by two sets of causes. He asks: “When we say that the act itself, which later through our own fault is evil, is produced by the supreme cause, that is, God, and by us, that is, our will, how should we understand it? Is it completely through God, or through ourselves? Is partly from him and partly from us?”²⁴ Vermigli argues that neither the human will to action, nor God can be said to be full or whole causes of the action:

If we refer the whole to the cause so that we understand our will to be the entire cause of the action, that it is able by itself to work without God, it is not true. For unless God gives assent it cannot produce action. And

²² “Sed longe aliter a superiori causa bona hoc opus proficiscitur et alia ratione a proxima causa corrupta. Opus hoc u test diabolic, et malorum hominum malum est. Malitiam trahit a pravitate diaboli, et malorum hominum, qui cum sint arbores malae, non possunt bonos fructus facere. Deus autem suprema causa optima, ut concurrat ad istas actiones, eas recte atque ordine facit.” (Ibid., 277v; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 228.)

²³ In this sense, Vermigli holds God to be the *causa removens prohibens* of evil. Cf. Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli’s Doctrine of Man and Grace*, 119.

²⁴ “Sed cum dicimus actum ipsum, qui postea vitio nostro malus est, a causa suprema (id est Deo) et nobis (id est voluntate nostra) produci, quomodo id accipiemus? An quod Deus totum faciat, et nos totum? An quod ille partem, et nos partem?” (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 280v; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 240.)

although God by his absolute power could perform the work himself, as the course of things stands he will not act alone, but will have creatures work with him. By this means neither the will nor even God is said to be the whole cause.²⁵

From this he does not conclude, however, that both God and the will contribute separate portions to the action. Rather, they are “joined together in action” in such a way that both of them are the “full cause,” each cause the total effect. “Our will does it all, and God does it all, but one is the first cause and the other secondary.”²⁶

This is highly relevant for our present subject, as it indicates that the way Vermigli employs the distinction between first and secondary causality is not such that the two causalities stand in competition with each other – even though his deliberations about their respective involvements in evil actions that we have seen above might seem to purport this. By contrast, he holds that each of them are full causes, and not in such a way that they each contribute separate elements to the effect. This suggests, moreover, that Vermigli envisages Divine causality to be qualitatively different from human causality, or, we might say, for the two to be ontologically different. This, however, implies a hierarchy of causes which is based on a metaphysical participation.

However, not all parts of Vermigli’s oeuvre display such a unified picture of God’s work in the world. As we shall see in the next section, Vermigli implies a two-tiered causal framework in most of his commentary of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. This is to say that he envisages a separation between God’s general and his special influence. God’s general influence applies to those who stand fully under the effects of the Fall, whereas he gives a special and more ‘intense’ influence to those who are regenerate through Christ.

²⁵ “Si totum referamus ad causam, ita ut intelligamus voluntatem nostrum totam causam actionis esse, ut per se absque Deo possit producere, verum non est. Quia nisi Deus innueret, non posset actionem edere. Ita Deus etsi absoluta potentia sua, per seipsum opus facere posset, tamen ut est cursus rerum, non vult solus agere, sed vult creaturam coagentem habere. Hoc pacto nec voluntas, nec Deus dicuntur tota causa.” (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 280v; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 240.)

²⁶ “At si ad effectum ipsum referantur, Deus et voluntas causa sunt plena. Nam Deus et voluntas totum effectum facit, licet coniugantur in actione. ... Ita est de voluntate et Deo: ipsa totum facit et Deus totum facit, sed una causa est prima, altera secundaria.” (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 280v; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 240.)

2) God's Work and the Effects of the Fall in the *Ethics* Commentary

In his *Commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics*, Vermigli's argumentative structure regularly proceeds as follows: he first quotes a passage from Aristotle, then clarifies its terms, before analysing its arguments and noting traditional opinions on them.²⁷ What is more, he ends each of these sections by comparing Aristotle with scripture. This is, as Luca Baschera and Christian Moser have shown, quite unique among early modern commentaries of the *Ethics*.²⁸

In one of these theological assessments of Aristotle, where he deals with the Stagirite's understanding of virtue in its relation to the passions, Vermigli distinguishes between two different ways in which virtues can govern the passions. The first is the "civil way," where passions are brought back to the mean through moral virtues. These virtues, Vermigli admits, "are sufficient if we consider the present life." However, they do not suffice "before God ... nor does civil justice suffice before his judgment seat."²⁹ Why not? Vermigli holds that

for those who are alienated from Christ, moderate passions, whatever their seemliness, are sins - not indeed by their nature, but by virtue of our inborn fault. We are like poisoned jars that corrupt the wine poured into them no matter how good it may be.³⁰

The metaphorical comparison of human beings and poisoned vessels is telling. The theological background for this is Vermigli's belief in the "corruption and ruin caused by original sin [*originis peccatum*]," which Vermigli finds affirmed in Paul's letter to the Romans.³¹ In his commentary on Romans 5:12 ("sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin"), Vermigli writes that original sin ought to be distinguished from

²⁷ On the structure of the commentary and its various levels of exegesis, see Luca Baschera and Christian Moser, "Einleitung," in *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik des Aristoteles* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 15–19.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁹ "Superest modo, ut videamus, quomodo ii affectus regi atque corrigi possint. Prima via civilis est per morales virtutes. Illae si tantum spectaremus praesentem vitam, satis essent, at revera coram Deo non sunt satis neque ad eius tribunal ista civilis iustitia sufficit." (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 466; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 319.)

³⁰ "Ideo in alienis hominibus a Christo ii moderati affectus, utut speciosi fuerint, peccata sunt, non quidem sua natura, sed nostro nativo vitio. Sumus enim ut infecta dolia, quae vinum quamvis bonum in nos infusum corrumpimus." (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 466–67; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 319.)

³¹ Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 418–19; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 286.

concrete sinful actions. The latter can be forgiven in Christ, and is then gone.³² By contrast, the “matter” of original sin, as Vermigli insists, cannot “pass away.” “For every one of us has the experience in themselves that the corruption of nature remains, given that we run headlong continually into sin. We are unapt for divine things, both in body and in mind.”³³ Even though he affirms that the guilt which arises through original sin is forgiven in baptism and through faith in Christ, he insists that “it is not perfectly true that original sin is abolished in the believers and in those who are baptised” for “the matter of sin still remains” afterwards. Even though it is “broken and of little force” in the godly, Vermigli still insists that they will not perfectly be free of original sin before they die.³⁴ If, however, even those who are united with Christ are not entirely ‘pure’ vessels (to remain in Vermigli’s metaphor), even more so must those who are still in their fallen state be ‘poisoned’. It is important to note, however, that the metaphor equally indicates that whatever is poured into fallen human beings is good *per se*, like the wine that is not in itself poisonous. Rather, its goodness is destroyed when entering the corrupt vessels.

This is how Vermigli understands human reason and what he calls “human affections.” They are in themselves good, but turn bad once they enter the human soul. Considering Aristotle’s claim that “reason always invites and encourages us to do better things” (NE I, 13), Vermigli writes that:

We accept that much knowledge of honest things remains in the human mind through the kindness of God. Hence we are able to concede *synderesis*, which is simply the preservation of that knowledge. We will equally not exclude any honest *storgas*. Nevertheless, though they are good things by nature, they are still sins in the unregenerate.³⁵

³² “Originale autem peccatum eo ab illis peccatis distat, quae vocant actualia ... Quare quum per fidem, et poenitentiam obligatio ad poenam, seu Dei offensa remittatur, facile concedemus, totum peccatum aboleri.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 151.)

³³ “Sed in originali peccato est alia ratio. Quia materia eius non transit. Quisque enim nostrum in se ipso experitur naturae corruptionem esse residuam: quum adhuc quoque in peccata perpetuo ruamus. Ad reas autem divinas corpore animoque inepti simus.” (Ibid.)

³⁴ “Reatus enim, et offensa Dei per fidem in Christum in baptismo condonatur, quamvis adhuc materia peccati supersit. Quae quamvis in hominibus sanctis fracta et debilitata sit, tamen perfectam eius expoliationem non nisi in morte consequimur.” (Ibid.)

³⁵ “Damus quidem multas adhuc notitias honestarum rerum Dei beneficio in mente humana conservari. Unde ibi possumus in hac sententia συνηρησιν concedere, quae non sit aliud quam istarum notitiarum conservatio. Neque inde aliquas honestas στοργας excludemus. Quae tamen, ut natura suae sint bonae res, non regeneratis tamen sunt peccata.” (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 417–18; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, 285.)

The first thing to note here is Vermigli's positive evaluation of the capacity of human reason even in fallen human beings. He concedes that knowledge of honest things remains in the fallen human mind and hence accepts the idea of *synderesis*, a natural capacity to apprehend the first principles of human action. All these things are good by nature [*natura suae sint bonae res*] he maintains. It is the effect of the Fall which turns them into 'sins' in the 'unregenerate'. Vermigli's argument is that reason and "honest things" remain good by nature, but that they are somehow robbed of their strength in those under the effect of the Fall: honest affections are "quite weak because [the unregenerate] are overwhelmed by wicked passions."³⁶ As for reason, it may still encourage these people "to do good and honest things," yet again he insists that "the things that pagans do in obedience to their reason" still do "not cease to be sins."³⁷

Two lines of argumentation come together here: on the one hand, reason cannot be good in the 'unregenerate', for Vermigli, because they are 'unapt' for godly things. Just as he explains with the metaphor of the poisoned vessels, he believes that those under the effect of the Fall and original sin will necessarily thwart good things and make them bad. On the other hand, Vermigli is keen to insist that human beings are not able even to contribute in the slightest way towards their own salvation. He quotes Jesus' saying in John 15:5 that without God, "you can do nothing," which sums up his concern.³⁸ It is the first of these two lines that is most interesting for our present consideration of the interplay of human and Divine causality – the argument about God's good wine being poured into corrupt and corrupting human vessels. What does this imply about the nature of God's action in the world?

First, it implies that God's influence on those who are under the effect of the Fall is merely general and extrinsic. Even after the Fall, God still offers them his good gifts, but they can only accept them by thwarting them. God therefore does not act directly in actions performed through the reason or affections of the 'unregenerate'. The good reason or affection which God offers constitutes only one element of a 'compound' action.

³⁶ "Illas in non regeneratis peccata ponimus et debiles admodum, ut qui a pravis affectibus vincantur." (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 418; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 285.)

³⁷ "Ita de ratione statuendum, licet ad bona et honesta interdum hortetur, attamen non ... peccata non sunt, quae faciunt ethnici, dum rationi suae obtemperant." (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 418; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 285–86.)

³⁸ Cf. Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 419.

The other element of it is the ‘poison’ contributed by human beings. Secondly, the fact that human vessels are not always corrupt but can be (at least partly) cleansed by Christ, indicates that there are two different ways in which God works in human beings, and that the interplay of Divine and human agency works differently in the ‘regenerate’. To remain within the metaphor, once the vessel of the human soul is no longer thought to be (entirely) poisonous, when it has become united with Christ, God works in it differently than he did before. It will be the task of Chapter Two to expound Vermigli’s theology of grace and justification and to argue more fully that his understanding of justification culminates in union with Christ; and that he conceives of this union, at least partly, in such terms which indicate an intrinsic transformation of the believer. For now, let us note that the interplay of Divine and human causality is governed by a divide between the way God works in the ‘unregenerate’, on the one hand, and the way he works in those united with Christ on the other.

This can be seen from the way Vermigli believes God to work in and through the those who are no longer under the full effect of original sin. They receive God’s special gifts without thwarting them. For instance, when dealing with the issue of virtue, Vermigli insists that God acts in and through their godly actions. *Pace* Aristotle, he holds that “God is the cause that impels people to act decently, and it is he who grants that those who are destined to be worthy may persevere in just actions.”³⁹ Those who are ‘destined’ will receive God’s special influence which overcomes the human propensity to twist God’s good gifts. This means that their actions become ‘mixed’, as Vermigli states, such as, for instance, the decision proverbially to bear one’s cross. Outside of God’s special help acting in them, no-one would do this, Vermigli insists.⁴⁰ This does not amount to an annihilation of the human will, Vermigli argues, despite there being an external principle at work in acts like these. For given that “our wills, changed by the Spirit of God, are internal to us and by their command, we are moved to these actions,” actions of self-denial in the

³⁹ “Neque illud recipimus, virtutem moralem usu atque consuetudine acquiri. Deus hic praeteritur, qui est potissima et praecipua omnium virtutum causa ... Deus enim causa est impellens ad honeste agendum idemque largitur, ut perseverantia probi sunt evasuri, iustis actionibus insistant.” (Ibid., 434–35; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, 296.)

⁴⁰ “Mixtae sunt hae actiones, quia nemo extra casum haec eligeret ... nisi enim Deus in nobis ageret, haec nullus nostrum faceret (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 577; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, 397.)

“regenerate” are truly “mixed,” as “God does not do them without us.”⁴¹ Simon Burton argues therefore that for Vermigli, “in the sphere of special grace the divine and human will can no longer be viewed as independent or semi-independent partial causes, but rather the divine will itself moves the human will to the good and effects its operation.”⁴²

We have seen so far, that Vermigli envisages a separation between God’s general grace which can be thwarted, on the one hand, and God’s special grace, which works in and through those who are regenerate, on the other hand. This two-tiered model of God’s influence in the world stands in contrast to the unified picture we have seen above in the Samuel commentary. There, God’s influence in the world is characterised ontologically, which, as we have seen, points to an implied metaphysics of participation. The implied metaphysical framework of the *Ethics* commentary, as we have seen it so far, stands in tension with this.

What are we to infer from this tension? Does it indicate different stages of Vermigli’s thinking? Or does it flow from different rhetorical contexts? The latter seems unlikely because both the Samuel commentary and the *Ethics* commentary were delivered in fairly similar settings, to an audience of future ministers. As for whether it represents a development in Vermigli’s thinking, I will argue that this is not the case either, because there are elements in the *Ethics* commentary itself which imply the unified framework which we have seen in the Samuel commentary. Let us focus on two examples from Vermigli’s commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* in particular, both of which assume a unified metaphysical framework of ontological dependence of all of creation on the Creator.

The first stems from Vermigli’s commentary on chapter 6 of the first book of Aristotle’s *Ethics*, where the Stagirite critically comments on Plato’s theory of the Forms. In Vermigli’s commentary, this sparks off a lengthy excursus on Plato. “Plato had a very clear notion of God,” Vermigli postulates. In particular, he continues,

Plato knew that God comprises everything and at the same time exceeds everything ... God pervades all things and never goes outside himself. ... He

⁴¹ “Fatetur principium, quo nostrae voluntates mutantur, extrinsecum esse. At nostrae voluntates immutatae a Spiritu Dei nobis intrinsecae sunt et illarum iussu ad istas actiones movemur, ideo voluntariae dici debent. Non enim a Deo sine nobis fiunt.” (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 577; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, 397.)

⁴² Cf. Simon G. Burton, “Peter Martyr Vermigli on Grace and Free Choice: Thomist and Augustinian Perspectives,” *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 15, no. 1 (2003): 37–52, here 50.

produces everything and is prompted by no other reason than his own goodness. ... And all things not only owe their creation to God but also tend toward him as to their ultimate goal. Therefore it is no wonder that everything is related to him, since the perfection of all things depends on him. Plato understood and explained in his writings very clearly those aspects of God's nature that I have just reviewed as well as many other concepts. The same concepts are contained both in holy scripture and in ancient ecclesiastical writers.⁴³

While this is not Vermigli's own elaboration on the doctrine of God, but rather his theological reading of Plato, he clearly indicates that he approved of everything he ascribes to Plato in this regard, otherwise he would not have stated that Plato "understood and explained" these "aspects of God's nature" "very clearly." Remarkably, as can be seen from the last sentence of the above quotation, Vermigli believed all of these elements of Platonic thought to be biblical.

Vermigli's main interest in his deliberations on the nature and usefulness of the theory of Ideas seems to be that the concept of 'Ideas', as used by Plato, should not be misunderstood as a kind of blueprint of creation to which earthly artists could take recourse: "From among the fathers of our religion who accepted the theory of Ideas, as did Augustine, none introduced them so that craftsmen might turn to them and learn how to perform their tasks, but rather as the Ideas toward which God himself looked when he formed the natures of different things."⁴⁴ Vermigli therefore approves of Ideas as *Divine* Ideas, insofar as they are not an 'add-on' to his essence. However, if the divine ideas are "nothing other than the divine nature or essence" through which God understands himself and "through which his creatures imitate him," then Plato cannot be accused of

⁴³ "Plato de Deo utique praeclarissima cognovit. ... Novit adhaec Plato Deum in se omnia complecti, sed ita ut omnia identidem excederet. ... Omnia penetrat Deus et seipsum nunquam egreditur. ... Produxit omnia, non alia sane causa impulsus quam sua ipsius bonitate. ... Nec solum omnia creavit Deus, verum in ipsum omnia tendunt ut in extremam finem. Nec mirum si ad eum omnia referantur, cum ab ipso pendeat omnium perfectio. Haec, quae recensui et alia complura de Deo praeclarissime sensit et scripsit. Quae partim in divinis literis habentur expressa, partim vero sunt usurpata ab ecclesiasticis scriptoribus et quidem vetustis." (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 218–19; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 136–37.)

⁴⁴ "Ex patribus nostrae religionis, qui iudicarunt ideas concedendas, ut fecit Augustinus, illas non induxisse, ut artifices ad ipsas conversi docerentur, quomodo sua opificia essent facturi, sed ad quas Deus ipse respiciens condiderit rerum diversarum naturam." (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 265; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 172.)

error.⁴⁵ Therefore, Vermigli holds that if Plato had called his Ideas “the nature and essence of God,” any of Aristotle’s accusations against him “would have been unfounded.” Indeed, the sole “ground on which he deserves to be criticised is that forms are distinct from things and that he failed to identify them – as the church fathers explain – with God’s nature and essence.”⁴⁶

What is striking about the doctrine of God which Vermigli ascribes to Plato, and which he believes to be biblical, is the degree to which it assumes an ontological dependence of all of creation on the Creator, without mentioning any dichotomy between before and after regeneration. “All things” were created by God, and tend toward him as their *telos*. “Everything” is related to God, and he is the pre-eminent source of the perfections of “all things.” This repeated emphasis on God’s all-encompassing work in the world, regardless of the Fall, is extraordinary, especially given how dominant the narrative of the Fall has been in what we have seen so far. Here, only one mode of Divine influence in the world is mentioned, not two. Equally, there is no mention of a ‘sphere’ or ‘phase’ of creation that has the capacity to twist God’s work as its efficient and final cause. Consequently, all of the foregoing points to a framework of metaphysical participation, since if God is the source of all perfections, then the being and goodness of all things depend on their participation in God’s being and goodness. So we find that in this context, Vermigli does not conceive of a sphere of creation in which God’s influence is less intense or direct than in other spheres.

The same non-dualist picture of God’s influence on the world is implied in the first few pages of Vermigli’s commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Here, Vermigli discusses desiring the Good, and the nature of this desire in all things. What is implied by the fact that all things desire some good, he holds,

seems to be a sort of imitation of Almighty God, the generator of all creatures. For as he produced each individual thing, he was motivated by some good end as is said in the book of Genesis: ‘God saw the light and the

⁴⁵ “Si nil aliud sensit ideas esse quam Dei naturam seu essentiam ab ipso Deo cognitam, qua illum res creatae imitentur ... erroris accusari non potest.” (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 229; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, 144.).

⁴⁶ “Eas [ideas] vero si naturam aut essentiam Dei dixisset, iure reprehendi non posset, sed eo tantum traducitur, quod eas disiunctas a rebus affirmarit, nec plane disserverit, ut christiani patres explicuerunt, eas idem atque naturam et essentiam Dei esse.” (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 234; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, 149.)

lights of the heaven, ...and that they were good...' Such pursuit of goodness in all things is the trace and mark of a divine quality.⁴⁷

Vermigli maintains that all things tend toward some good, and they imitate God in their very pursuit of and desire for goodness; if creatures strive towards some good, they display a "trace and mark of a divine quality." That there is an analogy between a creaturely desire and a Divine quality is based on the fact that God created all things. It is he, the creator, who ordained the desires proper to each creature: a "rational desire" in human beings, a "bestly desire" in animals and a "natural desire" in plants:

God is the author and ruler of nature, for he is perfectly conscious of whatever ends he wishes all things to tend toward. When in his own consciousness he prescribed a given end, he added inclinations and properties by which all things are enticed toward their own proper end.⁴⁸

Vermigli holds that because God is the creator and ruler of all things, he has set each creature its own end, and has given them the appropriate inclinations to reach this end. It is worth noting that Vermigli sees here no dichotomy at all between the desires and ends of things which are under the full effect of the Fall, and others which are not.

From these two examples, we can conclude that the tension which we have observed between the workings of God's influence on the world in the Samuel commentary and in the *Ethics* commentary, is present in the *Ethics* commentary by itself. The tension concerns the fact that Vermigli sometimes conceives of God's influence on the world in a unified way, implying an ontological dependence of everything on God, while at other times implying a two-tiered model of God's influence. In such a model, God's general influence is distinguished from his special influence, which he only bestows on those who are regenerate. As we will argue more fully in the last section below, this tension indicates that the metaphysics implicitly sustaining Vermigli's work is complex.

⁴⁷ "Primum, quod omnia bonum expetant, videtur imitatio quaedam esse Dei Opt[imi] Max[imi] authoris creaturarum. Is enim, dum conderet singula quaeque, in bonum finem ferebatur, sicut libro Geneseos dicitur Deum vidisse lucem, luminaria coeli ... quod essent bona ... Hoc itaque stadium bonorum in omnibus rebus vestigium et character est divinae proprietatis." (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 72; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 26, translation adapted.)

⁴⁸ "Satis est Deum naturae authorem atque regem illa esse praeditum; nanque optime novit, ad quos fines ista velit tendere, atque cum finem praescripserit sua noticia, pondera inclinationis et proprietates adiecit, quibus omnia haec ad suos fines incitantur." (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 66; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 22–23.)

3) Knowing the Truth: God's Work in Human Minds

So far, we have been focussing on the nature of God's influence on his creation in Vermigli's thought. This section will address a specific variation of this issue, namely human insight, and especially insight that surpasses 'natural' reason. In parallel to what we have seen above, the fundamental question is again whether God acts *in* or *alongside* human minds. If God works in human beings, leading them to (higher) understanding, this is an indication of a causal framework that implies an ontological hierarchy. However, if human beings are thought to gain higher insight through the infusion of a special supernatural light, which is "superadded to simple general influence from the outside," this manifests a concurrence causality with its division into general and special influence. In this latter case, furthermore, the influence is not caused by God in an immediate way. Rather, the special influence is mediated by a supernatural light, which is, as Schmutz has observed, "something between the Godhead and the human capacity to understand."⁴⁹

Again, I will argue that there is a fundamental division in Vermigli's thought, this time between insight that can be gained by reason or philosophy, on the one hand, and insight relying on special revelation, especially through scripture, on the other hand. Nevertheless, this division is counterbalanced by a strong sense that all truth originates in God – in a move which is parallel to the stress on creation and providence seen above. Once more, it is suggested that this indicates a tension in the causal framework sustaining Vermigli's theology.

Let us begin by considering a *scholium* from Vermigli's commentary on the first and second book of Kings which originates, like his Samuel commentary, from his lectures in Zurich between mid-1556 and mid-1558.⁵⁰ This *scholium*, as Joseph McLelland has pointed out, "deals explicitly with the relation between reason and revelation."⁵¹ Its subject is the resurrection of the dead, and in particular whether there will be a new union between the soul and the body. This resurrection of the body as professed in the creeds "is very difficult to believe," Vermigli admits, "because it is something far removed from

⁴⁹ Schmutz, "La doctrine médiévale des causes et la théologie de la nature pure (XIIe-XVIIe siècles)," 216; 218. My translation.

⁵⁰ Vermigli, *Melachim*, 214v–233r; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 47–131. On the historical background of the lectures, see Baumann, "Petrus Martyr Vermigli in Zürich (1556-1662)", esp. 178.

⁵¹ In "About the Translation", Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 34.

human reason.”⁵² In replying to the question whether there were any arguments for the resurrection of the body “which are natural and conclusive,” Vermigli concludes that “reasons of that kind cannot be found,” since “the thing itself surpasses the power of nature.”⁵³ Nevertheless, Vermigli gathers many arguments why the resurrection of the body is still “probable” (but not conclusive) when “based on natural reasoning.”⁵⁴ These probable arguments are moreover “corroborated by the divine writings” for believers. They can therefore nonetheless employ them and “find comfort” in them, especially since the meticulously collected evidence from the Old and New Testaments serves to “confirm” them “with the word of God.”⁵⁵

Taking a step back from the main argument, what does the resurrection *scholium* tell us about how human beings acquire insight, and about God’s influence in the process? It seems clear that Vermigli conceives of a two tier-system noetic. There are two steps that lead to insight into the resurrection of the body, and they are not intrinsically connected. First, there is the domain of *rationes naturales*⁵⁶ or natural reasoning, thought of as neutral and accessible to everyone. We can assume that Vermigli would affirm that this level is supported by God’s general sustaining influence. Secondly, there is the domain of revelation. It builds on natural reason insofar as it ‘confirms’ and ‘corroborates’ what the latter had already ascertained. Nevertheless, it is not as if God is thought to enlighten this natural reason from within. The strengthening confirmation does not come from a kind of ‘higher reason’ infused into the soul by God; rather, it is exclusively mediated through the Scriptures, thereby coming from without. The Scriptures as the word of God bear the brunt – if not all – of this revelatory work. They mediate between God and human minds. This mediation from without, as well as the sheer division of the process of insight into two spheres, together indicate that, underlying and sustaining all this, there is an

⁵² “Articulus de Resurrectione carnis difficillime creditur, quod sit res ab humana ratione longe remota.” (Vermigli, *Melachim*, 214v; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 47.)

⁵³ “An rationes haberentur de resurrectione mortuorum, quae naturales essent et ἀποδείκτικαι, hoc pacto inquam, quandoquidem res ipsa totam vim naturae superat, rationes huius generis haberi non posse.” (Vermigli, *Melachim*, 217r; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 58.)

⁵⁴ “[N]aturalibus rationibus ... [sunt] probabiles, non apodeicticae.” (Vermigli, *Melachim*, 218v; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 65.)

⁵⁵ “Fidelibus autem ratio adducta ex divinis literis corroboratur,” “Verum fideles eam confirmando ex verbo Dei, quo animi nostri post mortem incorruptio affirmatur, et unionis eius cum corpore facultas libera Deo conceditur, illa utuntur et sese consolantur.” (Vermigli, *Melachim*, 217v; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 60–61.)

⁵⁶ Cf. Vermigli, *Melachim*, 218v; Vermigli, *Philosophical Works*, 65.

extrinsic understanding of God's noetic influence on human understanding: God adds his special influence to aid human insight in some cases, but he does not act in and through human minds in general.

Returning to Vermigli's Aristotle commentary once again, an examination of its introduction confirms this picture – at least initially. The reflection here is more abstract than in the case of the resurrection *locus*; it concerns the very notion of philosophy and its relationship to theology. "All our knowledge is either revealed or acquired," Vermigli writes. "In the first instance it is theology, in the other philosophy."⁵⁷ Philosophy should be defined, Vermigli further writes, as

a capacity given by God to human minds, developed through effort and exercise, by which all existing things are perceived as surely and logically as possible. ... Clearly God is the author. He endowed our minds with light and planted the seeds from which the principles of all knowledge arose.⁵⁸

The categorical distinction between acquired and revealed knowledge again bespeaks a causal framework in which God's influence is thought to work either generally or specially. In the above quotation, this is moreover confirmed by the fact that Vermigli proceeds on the assumption that philosophical knowledge is acquired independently of God's immediate influence. Once he has bestowed the means for it, viz. the capacity for philosophising and the seeds of knowledge, God's influence is no longer needed for acquiring philosophical knowledge. The kind of insight that can be attained through the practice of philosophy appears therefore to fall entirely within the sphere of God's general influence on human minds.

However, a few pages into the same introduction, Vermigli is more ambiguous in this regard. Indeed, as we shall see, it is no longer entirely clear whether knowledge acquired by philosophy is subject to God's *influentia generalis* only. The context here is Vermigli addressing the saying in Colossians 2:8, namely that Christians ought to "beware lest anyone spoil [them] through philosophy." Dispelling any of his students' fears about

⁵⁷ "Omnis nostra noticia vel est revelata vel acquisita: in primo membro theologia, in altero philosophia." (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 43; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 7.)

⁵⁸ "Sed videtur definienda, ut sit habitus mentibus humanis a Deo concessus, industria et exercitio auctus, quo comprehenduntur omnia, quae sunt, qua certo et firma ratione comprehendi possunt. ... Deus ponatur auctor: is enim lucem inservit nostris mentibus et semina indidit, quae principia sunt omnium scientiarum." (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 43–44; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 7.)

the potential harmful effects of the lecture series he was about to embark upon, Vermigli holds:

Since true philosophy derives from the knowledge of created things, and from these propositions reaches many conclusions about the justice and righteousness that God implanted naturally in human minds, it cannot therefore rightly be criticised: for it is the work of God and could not be enjoyed by us without his special contribution.⁵⁹

What is remarkable about this quotation is that it combines a sense that philosophy proceeds from what God has *naturally* put in human minds – assuming, that is, no special influence of God beyond his initial endowment of the mind with the necessary capacities – with the explicit acknowledgement that philosophy would not be possible without God’s *special gift*. Is it, after all, that human beings reach philosophical insights due to God’s *influentia specialis*? If so, it would seem that philosophical insight is to some degree ‘revealed’, too.

This means that Vermigli does not maintain throughout the hard boundary between revealed and acquired knowledge, which, as we have seen above, he had assumed at the outset of the introduction to the *Ethics*. Too strong is his concern that God is the author of all truth and knowledge. Another example where this concern manifests itself can be seen in Vermigli’s commentary on Romans 1:19, where he reflects on what can be known of God from creation. In this context, Vermigli asks: given that “all truth comes from God” – something he never questioned for a second⁶⁰ – *how* does it come from God to human beings? His preferred answer to the question is that

God has planted *prolepsis* in our minds, that is, anticipations and notions through which we are led to conceive noble and exalted opinions about the divine nature. These ideas of God naturally engrafted in us are daily confirmed by the observation of created things.⁶¹

⁵⁹ “Vera philosophia, cum ex notitia creaturam colligatur et multa concludat ex his propositionibus de iustitia et rectitudine, quae Deus naturaliter mentibus hominum inservit, iure accusari non potest. Est enim Dei opus et absque illius munere singulari ab hominibus haberi non potuit.” (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 52; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, 13.)

⁶⁰ As also seen for instance in the *Ethics* commentary, where he states: “We do not deny the sentiment hallowed by the centuries, which says that any truth set forth by an author proceeds from the Holy Spirit.” / “Non enim inficiamur sententiam illam vetustate tritissimam, qua dicitur a Spiritu sancto proficisci, quicquid veri ab auctore cuiusque modi prolatus fuerit.” (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 133–34; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, 71.)

⁶¹ “Omne verum a Deo esse. Non enim ex nobis nascitur. Sed quomodo sit a Deo? ... Deus inserverit animis nostris προληψεις, hoc est anticipationes et informationes per quas impellimur ad opinandum praeclara

Vermigli seems to refer to the Stoic doctrine of *prolepsis*, but his main focus is that God is the author of anything that leads human beings to insight into higher realities. The same is the case in the comparable expressions from the *Ethics* commentary we have seen above – especially the concept of the God-given seeds “which are the principles of all knowledge” and the “justice and righteousness that God planted naturally in human minds.” As their creator and sustainer, God is also the source of all inchoate or potential knowledge in human beings, and this includes the knowledge of God himself. In the commentary on Romans 1:19, Vermigli explicitly denounces as “proud and wicked” those who think that they have learned truths about God “from Aristotle or from Plato, giving no thanks whatever to God for them.” Even though these philosophers were “agents and instruments” of truth, whatever they say is ultimately given to them, Vermigli holds. Rather than its “authors,” they are “mediators and messengers” of the truth, comparable to Moses in the Old Testament.⁶²

This is relevant to our question about God’s influence in philosophical insight, for it again abandons the strict division between philosophical or acquired knowledge, on the one hand, and theological or revealed knowledge, on the other hand, and replaces it with a more unified model, which sees God as the source of all knowledge and truth. In such a model, moreover, God does not necessarily superimpose his influence on the human mind in order to grant it greater insight into supernatural truths, since the “anticipations” or “seeds” of the latter are already given to the mind in creation. The road to insight into higher truth is therefore one of a Divinely aided actualisation of what is already granted.

However, there is one crucial demarcation in this unified model where God is the origin of all truth, whether *in nuce* or actualised. Specifically, it is the division between the knowledge of the faithful, and the knowledge any neutral observer can have:

We should understand that knowledge of God is of two kinds. One is effectual, by which we are so changed that we try to express what we know

atque eximia de natura Dei. Atque haec notitiae de Deo nobis naturaliter insitae observatione rerum creatarum in dies magis ac magis confirmantur et expoliuntur.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 29.)

⁶² “Inepte nec minus impie aliqui dicunt, has veritates ab Aristotele aut Platone se didicisse, ita ut Deo nequaquequam propter illas gratias agant. Fuerunt isti quidem organa et instrumenta, non tamen authores. Isti autem perinde dicunt, ac si quis Israelita diceret, se veritates legis non per Deum cognovisse, sed per Mosem. Cum is mediator tantum fuerit et internuntius Dei.” (Ibid.)

in works; Scripture ascribes this knowledge of God to the faithful alone. The other is frigid, by which we do not become better people.⁶³

Crucially, the difference between these kinds of knowledge does not lie in their respective nature, but rather in their ‘effectivity’ – whether or not knowing something makes a real-life difference. The knowledge of God that can be had in faith is not in itself fundamentally different from other kinds of knowledge of God. For, as Vermigli holds, “truth has the same nature” in either case. Indeed, the fact that “the truth we have by faith is stronger for proceeding to action than the truth perceived by nature” does not indicate that there are two different truths. Rather,

the difference arises from the ways and means by which it is perceived. Natural strength is corrupt, weakened and defiled through sin, so that the truth which it grasps has no effect. But faith has joined with it the divine inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit so that it apprehends truth effectively. Hence the difference is not in truth itself, but in the means by which we embrace it.⁶⁴

What is noteworthy about this quotation is that it affirms that human beings without faith can grasp truth by their creaturely strength – even if it “has no effect.” This is in itself remarkable, especially given that this strength for Vermigli is debilitated and perverted through sin, as we have seen above. In contrast to the poisoned-jars motif we have seen above, it is not that the ‘wine’ of truth is getting poisoned in fallen human minds, rather – to use the same metaphor – that this wine does not affect them when they drink it. What Vermigli circumvents by this move is having to affirm something along the lines of the notoriously problematic notion of there being a “double truth,”⁶⁵ all while maintaining – in good Augustinian fashion – that the Fall affects all aspects of human existence, including the ability to relate to truth.

⁶³ “Postremo sciendum, duplicem esse Dei notitiam: unam efficacem, qua immutamur, ita, ut quae novimus opere conemur exprimere, et hanc Dei notitiam solis piis scripturae sanctae concedunt. Alteram vero frigidam, qua nihilo reddimur meliores.” (Ibid., 30.)

⁶⁴ “Rogaveris forsitan qui fiat, ut veritas quam habemus ex fide fortior sit ad erumpendum in actum quam veritas naturaliter percepta? Hoc sane minime ex eo provenit quod una veritas per seipsam, et seorsim accepta fortior sit altera. Eandem utrobique naturam habet, caeterum discrimen ex medio ac instrumento provenit quo illa percipitur. Vires naturae corruptae sunt, infirmae ac vitiatae per peccatum. Ideoque veritatem quam apprehendunt non habent efficacem. At fides coniunctum habet divinum afflatum et vim spiritus sancti. Ideo efficaciter verum apprehendit. Diversitas ergo non est in ipsa veritate, sed in medio atque instrumento quo illam amplectimur.” (Ibid., 27.)

⁶⁵ On the history of the notion of double truth, see Luca Bianchi, *Pour une histoire de la double vérité*, Conférences Pierre Abélard (Paris: J. Vrin, 2008).

What is God's role in the process that leads human beings to insight into the truth? As was the case with God's influence on or in human actions, we find again that there is not one single metaphysical model that can accommodate Vermigli's stance on this question. Some of his statements assume there to be a natural reason, on the one hand, which is accessible to everyone but limited in its reach when it comes to divine matters, and special revelations, which are given to the faithful only, on the other hand. This two-tier model, where reason and revelation (and philosophy and theology) are essentially disconnected, is however, implicitly challenged by other statements of his, which presuppose an inherent connection between all truth, and stress God as being its universal origin. The coexistence of both these models, is indicative, as I have argued, of a non-unified metaphysics. Moreover, one strategy by which Vermigli attempted to hold all this together with reference to truth is by his emphasis on different levels of its effectivity.

Finally, let us briefly consider Stephen Grabill, who has recently analysed some of the same sources that we have studied above in a book urging a re-appraisal of natural theology.⁶⁶ In his section on Vermigli, who is one of his key witnesses, Grabill concludes that for Vermigli, "God is revealed in nature, and that this revelation, however limited and inadequate, is real knowledge."⁶⁷ Grabill moreover states that Vermigli gives an "optimistic appraisal of the post-lapsarian natural human faculties."⁶⁸ Against the background of our findings, this last judgement needs to be nuanced. As we have seen, Vermigli indeed holds that the faculty of human reason, for example, is good in itself. Yet can this view really be called "optimistic," especially given that Vermigli equally holds that the faculty will become twisted outside of God's special influence? Similarly, the way Grabill assesses Vermigli's view of God as revealed in nature also needs nuancing against the background of my argument. We have seen that Vermigli envisages the relationship between Divine and human causality in two different ways. One model distinguishes a general and a special sphere of God's influence, whereas the other is characterised by a continuously ontological determination of God's causality. Either of these two models

⁶⁶ Stephen John Grabill, *Rediscovering the Natural Law in Reformed Theological Ethics* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2006).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 121.

arguably leads to a different theological appreciation of nature. For in the case of the former model, nature by itself, with merely the general help of God, is marked by its fallenness. While it is not entirely devoid of God because he sustains it with his general influence, it is nevertheless able to twist God's influence because this influence is seen as extrinsic and non-ontological. In the case of the more unified ontological model of influence, however, there is nothing which is not dependent on God in such a fundamental way that it also refers to God. This opens the possibility for a much more positive appreciation of nature *per se*, and would indeed enable the kind of natural theology that is based on nature participating in God. Vermigli's *oeuvre* would be partly open to an argument for such a natural theology, or the kind of natural law that flows from seeing God as the source of everything. However, Grabill's argument seems to be for another kind of natural law, one which does not flow from God being the pre-eminent source of being, but which reduces God to an extrinsic cause of nature. This can be seen from the way he describes the notions he wishes to defend as "the idea that God promulgated a natural law that directs and binds human creatures" and "that conscience and reason serve as natural lights leading people to act in accord with natural law."⁶⁹

4) The Implied Metaphysics of the Workings of Causality in Vermigli

The subject matter of this chapter has been the interplay between Divine and human agency as envisaged by Peter Martyr Vermigli. We have approached this topic through two kinds of Vermigli's commentaries (biblical and Aristotelian) and from two perspectives. The two perspectives were (1) God's influence in the world in general, and (2) his role in human insight into the truth. Both perspectives have revealed a similar picture, namely a plurality. In answer to the question "how does God work in the world, according to Vermigli?" we have to say "it depends."

On the one hand, Vermigli envisages God's influence on human actions and human insight to be governed by a two-step-process. In the first of these steps, Vermigli conceives of God's influence as merely general, such that he works alongside human beings who contribute 'their' – more often than not corrupt – part towards the action. In the second of these steps, God is seen to work more specially in human beings, leading

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2.

them to good works and higher insight. On the other hand, Vermigli simultaneously also holds that God's work in the world is unified, and not governed by the two steps we have just described. This can be seen in Vermigli's theology of providence, which itself is based on his doctrine of creation and the assertion that everything is created by God and given its end by him. It can equally be seen in his understanding that all truth comes from God.

The fact that both these models of causality are present in Vermigli's theology, even in one and the same context (viz. his *Ethics* commentary) indicates that the metaphysical framework implicitly sustaining Vermigli's thought is not uniform. As we have seen, the two-tier processes suggest that God's influence in the world is not determined by a qualitative difference between his and the world's being. This is because God's influence could not be considered merely general if it was an ontological influence, and hence intrinsic to the secondary cause. The same is not the case with Vermigli's concern for the all-encompassing nature of providence, and his affirmation that all truth comes from God. As we have seen, both imply a metaphysical framework in which God is the pre-eminent source of being and truth, and where everything participates in him.

We have seen the importance which Vermigli places on the distinction between those who are "unregenerate" and those who are "regenerate." In the next chapter, we will focus more closely on how he envisages individual human beings to pass from one state to the other, and specifically how he conceives God's gift of grace to be given to them, and the metaphysical implications this bears.

Chapter Two: Justification and the Workings of Gift Giving

In the present chapter, we will turn to what is perhaps the heart of Vermigli's theological thought: the justification of believers and their union with Christ. The central issue here is how God grants his grace to human beings. This gift is interesting because its giver is the transcendent Creator of all things, whereas its recipients are created beings. The question is how this fundamental dissimilarity between the donor and the beneficiaries affects the condition of the possibility of the gift, both with regard to the possibility of God bestowing the gift of grace, and to the possibility of human beings receiving it. Moreover, different answers as to how it is possible to give or receive this gift are sustained by different metaphysical frameworks, or ways of envisaging the relationship between God and the world.

In accordance with the conceptual alternatives described in the introduction, and which we have encountered in the first chapter, God's bestowal of grace can be conceptualised in two ways: God works either *in* or *alongside* human beings. Each of these two alternatives is indicative of a different way to conceive of the metaphysical relationship between God and the world.

In the first case, God is seen to work through his grace *in* human beings (and the world at large). His gift touches the very being of those who receive it, affecting them from the inside, as it were. The gift therefore is ontological in character. However, this is only possible if there is a qualitative difference between God's being and the being of creatures. This notion is therefore based on the idea that God, as the giver of being, gives being to his creatures, but 'is' more fully or more intensely than they 'are'. When God gives his creatures additional graces beyond their being – above all the grace of salvation – then this grace flows from and is in continuity with the creatures' ontological dependence on God. The precondition of God's 'intrinsic' bestowal of grace is therefore the creatures' ontological participation in God.

In the second case, by contrast, the workings of grace are extrinsic, because God, in giving his grace, is thought to work alongside – and not in – human beings. The bestowal of grace is nominal in this case, meaning that grace is given to human beings in the way that a name is given, without an ontological dimension involved in the gift. This alternative

is also sometimes termed 'forensic', insofar as it is understood that the gift of grace renders human beings acceptable in God's judgement. This view is often understood to be the 'classically Protestant' view. It has its origin in a strong sense that the gift of grace cannot be earned, and that the gift must remain wholly external to its recipients in order for it to be a 'pure' gift. Given that the workings of grace are thus thought to be extrinsic, the conditions of possibility of this kind of bestowal of grace are detached from an ontological dependence of creatures on God, and there is no reason to suppose a qualitative difference in God's being and the being of human persons. This kind of bestowal of grace implies a univocal understanding of being.

This chapter will argue that the workings of grace in Vermigli's oeuvre bear the marks of two different metaphysical frameworks. As we will see, this plurality manifests itself in his writings on justification and the union of Christ in the form of an *aporia*. This *aporia* is not immediately visible in Vermigli's writings; rather, one lights upon it only by enquiring into the conditions of integrating his teachings on justification, faith, and union with Christ. The first two sections that follow will therefore consider Vermigli's teaching on justification and the believer's union with Christ respectively. The character of these sections is mainly descriptive. The goal of this exposition is to prepare the ground for section three, where I will consider the aporetic element in Vermigli's teaching on the workings of grace. As we shall see, Vermigli's conception of the believer's "mystical union" with Christ, when taken together with his writings about justification, reveals that for Vermigli the crucial moment of change in the believer's status is aporetic. This is because the nature or character of this change seems to be simultaneously extrinsic and intrinsic. I shall argue that this *aporia* suggests that Vermigli's theology of grace simultaneously inhabits a participatory and a univocal metaphysics.

1) Three Times Three: Vermigli's *Scholia* on Justification

Peter Martyr Vermigli published three treatises on the justification of the believer, each taking the form of a theological *scholium* within biblical commentaries, one each in his commentaries on the book of Genesis, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians and Paul's

letter to the Romans.¹ As we shall see, Vermigli distinguishes three senses of what it means for God to bestow grace upon the believer, or “to justify” him, in each of these *scholia*. In what follows, I will present the *scholia* one by one, focussing on the contours of Vermigli’s positive teaching (as opposed to his polemics), thereby presenting the textual bases for the aporetic elements which I will bring out more fully in the third section below.

The historical theologian Frank James has devoted a doctoral thesis on these three *scholia*, arguing that Vermigli’s thought underwent substantial development between the Genesis *scholium* and the Romans *scholium*.² Specifically, James contends that Vermigli, over the course of his career north of the Alps, gradually moved away from understanding justification as a broad and multi-faceted process (including not only the forgiveness of sins, but also the transformation of the believer’s life), to a more clear-cut understanding in which he defined justification “exclusively as forensic.”³ As a subplot of my argument, this section will demonstrate that James’s thesis needs revision. We shall see that there are significant continuities between the three *scholia*, even though James is right in observing that Vermigli developed his thinking between his three *scholia de iustificatione*, especially as he became increasingly engaged in polemical debates. Moreover, while the forensic element is doubtlessly present in Vermigli’s thought, all of the *scholia*, even the most polemic one, display a significantly more complex picture of what it means for God to justify human beings than its being a merely forensic or imputational act.

That James’s conclusion should be met with caution is moreover indicated by the way in which it seems to be determined by the main thrust of his thesis, which is to refute the argument that Vermigli’s doctrine of justification is “lacking full Protestant

¹ Peter Martyr Vermigli, *In primum librum Mosis, qui volgo Genesis dicitur commentarii doctissimi* (Zürich: Ch. Froschauer, 1569), 59r–61v; Peter Martyr Vermigli, *In selectissimam S. Pauli priorem ad Corinth[ios] Epistolam ... Commentarii doctissimi* (Zürich: Ch. Froschauer, 1551), 29v–39r ; (= an English translation of this is available in John Patrick Donnelly, Frank A. James, and Joseph C. McLelland, eds., *The Peter Martyr Reader* [Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 1999], 133–50); Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 517–75; (= an English translation of this lengthy locus has been made available in the Peter Martyr library: Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*).

² Frank A. James, “De Justificatione: The Evolution of Peter Martyr Vermigli’s Doctrine of Justification” (PhD thesis, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2000).

³ Ibid., 330. The same conclusion is also drawn in: Frank A. James, “Romans Commentary: Justification and Sanctification,” in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank A. James (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 305–17.

credentials.”⁴ This can be seen on various levels: on a micro-level, James repeatedly stresses that Vermigli uses a “distinctively Protestant terminology” (163; 279), that he is “in accord with distinctively Protestant thought” (164), that he “firmly takes a Protestant stance” (167), and that he possesses “full Protestant vigor” (168), to name only a few of many instances. On a structural level, it is also striking how James, in each of his chapters discussing his three main source texts, first enquires about the texts’ Protestant ‘credentials’, before guiding his readers through their actual content. James’s assertion that Vermigli conceived of justification in forensic terms is in continuation with the fact that he sees Vermigli as a “major Reformed theologian”⁵ and that for him, being ‘Protestant’ (and especially ‘Reformed’) includes an affirmation of the purely forensic nature of justification. The methodological difficulty with this approach is that it measures Vermigli against the yardstick of a stable, universally agreed-on and clearly delineated notion of ‘Protestantism’, which is assumed rather than defended by James.⁶ This leads James moreover to focus one-sidedly on a particular set of issues, while not taking into account the full range of topics and the complexity of the sources.

THE GENESIS SCHOLIUM

Vermigli’s first *scholium* on justification dates to lectures held during his first stay in Strasbourg,⁷ and he takes his cue from Genesis 15:6, “Abraham believed the LORD; and the LORD reckoned it to him as righteousness.” What is the nature of this righteousness, Vermigli asks? He answers that the righteousness conferred on human beings by God is threefold.⁸ It is worth quoting him in full on this:

But the righteousness conferred on us by God has three parts. The first is remission of sins, regeneration or adoption as children and admission to

⁴ James, “De Justificatione: The Evolution of Peter Martyr Vermigli’s Doctrine of Justification,” 91.

⁵ James, “Romans Commentary: Justification and Sanctification,” 313.

⁶ The following historical *caveat* intimates that James implicitly proceeds from the assumption that there is a clear, stable and agreed-on notion of what it means to be Protestant: He asks his readers to “bear in mind that [Vermigli] does not write within the well-defined perimeters [!] of contemporary Reformed theology” (35).

⁷ Commentators disagree over when exactly the Genesis lectures were held: Klaus Sturm dates the lectures 1544–45 (Klaus Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermiglis während seines ersten Aufenthalts in Strassburg 1542–1547: Ein Reformkatholik unter den Vätern der reformierten Kirche* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlagsgesellschaft, 1971], 32–34). Frank James, however, argues that Vermigli delivered the lectures already in the academic year 1543–44: James, *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Predestination: The Augustinian Inheritance of an Italian Reformer*, 45–49.

⁸ The best scholarly treatment of this *scholium* is Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermiglis*, 58–70.

eternal life. The second is to do good deeds and live rightly. From the frequent practice of these holy actions various most noble habits are acquired and finally also a certain inherent righteousness which pleases God. The third is recompense and rewards both in our present life and in the one to come. These are said to be our righteousness because they are signs of commendation and approval since they are said to be given to us on account of good deeds.⁹

In accordance with these three meanings of righteousness, continues Vermigli, “to *make* righteous” or “to justify” equally has three different semantic aspects, examples for all of which can be found in the Scriptures. The first is associated with not counting someone’s sins against them¹⁰ – as when Israel’s judges declared someone to be just, thereby absolving them from their wrongdoing.¹¹ (It is worth noting, however, that in the programmatic statement quoted above, Vermigli goes beyond a purely declaratory or even absolving understanding of God’s ‘first’ righteousness, for he holds that it does not only entail the remission of sins, but also a regeneration and adoption as children.)

The second aspect of the righteousness that God gives to human beings manifests itself in a holy life. Vermigli specifies therefore that “to justify sometimes also means actually making just, or holy. [This happens] either through a renewal of nature, or through habits from which flow holy and honest actions.”¹² As a scriptural example for this use of the term, he mentions Revelation 22:11: “Let ... the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy.” Here, “to justify” means more than a declaration on the part of the judge; rather, it involves the beneficiaries themselves becoming holy, and acting accordingly. In the quotation above, Vermigli associates this with an inherent righteousness (*iustitia ... inhaerens*) which is built up through the repetition of good acts,

⁹ “At iustitia nobis collata a Deo, tres habet partes. Primam, remissionem peccatorum, regenerationem sive adoptionem filiorum, et cooptationem ad vitam aeternam. Secundam, benefacere, recte vivere, ex quibus frequentibus sanctis actionibus acquiruntur varii nobilissimi habitus, et demum iustitia quaedam nobis inhaerens quae Deo placet. Tertiam, mercedes, remunerationes cum in praesenti vita tum in futura, quae ideo iustitia nostra dicuntur, quod sint illius indicia, commendatio, et comprobatio, cum dicuntur nobis dari propter benefacta.” (Vermigli, *In primum librum Mosis, qui volgo Genesis dicitur commentarii doctissimi*, 59r.)

¹⁰ “Quare iustificare quandoque sumitur pro eo quod est peccata condonare, non illa peccantibus imputare, imo eos pro illis habere qui non peccarint.” (Ibid.)

¹¹ The scriptural example given for this meaning is Deut 25:1: “Suppose two persons have a dispute and enter into litigation, and the judges decide between them, *declaring one to be in the right* and the other to be in the wrong.” In Vermigli’s words it means “aliquem iudicare et pronunciare iustum, illum absolvendo.” Ibid.

¹² “Aliquando iustificare idem significat, quod revera iustum facere, id est, sanctum, vel instaurando naturam, vel per habitus a sanctis et rectis actionibus emanantes.” (Ibid.)

which again lead to wholesome habits. Finally, Vermigli states that in accordance with the third righteousness above, “to justify sometimes also means to adorn someone with rewards.”¹³

In the remainder of the Genesis *scholium*, Vermigli defends the theses (1) that the law does not justify, (2) that justification cannot be had through works of the law, (3) that Christians are justified through faith, and (4) that ceremonies do not justify¹⁴ – before he returns once again to the three dimensions of God’s bestowal of grace. That it is faith which justifies “is to be understood from the first meaning of righteousness and of justifying,” he writes, “because surely [it is] through faith [that] we understand that our sins are remitted to us and we are deemed just by God the judge.”¹⁵ Vermigli moreover specifies that by this we should not understand that faith itself *is* this first dimension of righteousness. Rather, faith is that *through which* the Christian apprehends God’s righteousness. Indeed, Vermigli repeatedly associates faith with the power to *apprehend* God’s gifts.¹⁶ Because of this, he argues, faith is fundamental for all three dimensions of God’s justifying action. Insofar as all three ways in which God’s bestows his rightfulness on human beings are God’s gifts – not only the gift of forgiveness, but also the gift of a new life of holy living and the gift of divine rewards – they all depend on faith as the human capacity to apprehend God’s gifts. “Therefore,” Vermigli reasons,

if you consider this disposition or faculty, through which we are capable of any of these three kinds of righteousness and through which we apprehend them, [you will understand that] we attribute all of this to faith. For since they are God’s gifts, it is necessary that we should receive them through faith, while he offers them to us.¹⁷

We shall return below to the extraordinary mediatory significance Vermigli ascribes to faith as a tool of apprehension, and especially to the difficulties which this entails, such as the question as to whether this faith itself is in danger of becoming a kind of work (of the

¹³ “Iustificare significat etiam nonnunquam ... praemiis ornare.” (Ibid., 59v.)

¹⁴ Ibid., 59v–60v.

¹⁵ “...hoc intelligendum est de prima iustitiae et iustificandi significatione, quod scilicet fide illud assequimur, ut nostra nobis remittantur peccata et iusti Dei iudico reputemur.” (Ibid., 60v.)

¹⁶ “... habet vim *apprehendendi* misericordiam et promissionem ... Ergo fides ... est quo à Deo rem oblatam nobis remissionem peccatorum et regenerationem *apprehendimus*.” (Ibid., italics mine.)

¹⁷ “Quare si dispositionem et facultatem spectes, qua cuiuslibet iustitiae iam expositae sumus capaces, illasque apprehendimus, totum hoc fidei tribuimus, nam cum dona Dei sint, ut illa fide recipiamus dum ille nobis ea offert, necesse est.” (Ibid.)

sort Vermigli rejects). In the Genesis *scholium*, Vermigli briefly alludes to this problematic, in an important passage following the above: he teaches that believers ought to rely on the *object* of their apprehension – God’s mercy and his promises – rather than putting their trust in the power and excellence of their own assent. The latter would mean to depend on one’s own powers and reason, which are so ridden with infirmities and temptations that one “can never be sure that it has everything which God demands.”¹⁸

This passage not only testifies to Vermigli’s keen awareness of the danger that faith may be misunderstood as a second-level ‘work’, but it also indicates one of his main concerns throughout: the conviction that no *human* act can ultimately satisfy God’s demands. This is particularly evident in his concluding discussion on the nature of the “second” righteousness. Here Vermigli stresses that believers should not think that they can subsist in the divine judgement because they have led a virtuous life of holy and noble actions. He walks a tightrope here, for while stressing the insufficiency of this second righteousness of good human actions, he nonetheless at the same time teaches that it is necessary for our salvation insofar as it follows the first righteousness.¹⁹ “So even though this righteousness cannot satisfy God,” Vermigli states,

it nonetheless pleases God and has his approval ... It equally does not have to disturb us that no action which we can do as long as we live here, is free from uncleanness and fault and spoiled by guilt ... for through Christ we know for sure that our father will accept this inchoate obedience to the law.²⁰

Vermigli concludes the Genesis *scholium* with a further explication of the third aspect of God’s bestowal of righteousness, namely the rewards that the faithful are given by God. They indicate that someone is living in the second righteousness, Vermigli explains; that is, that they are leading a holy life. A twofold relationship is possible between holy works and Divine rewards: either holy works are their own reward already, since through them

¹⁸ “In qua tamen fidei apprehensione ... tibi prorsus ad eius obiectum recurrendum esse a te apprehensum, scilicet ad Dei misericordiam et promissionem, ita ut non haereas efficaciae et virtuti actionis assentiendi quae ex tua mente exprimitur: nam illa suas habet infirmitates et sordes, titubationem, tentationes, ita ut de illa nunquam tutus esse possis quod omnia habeat ibi a Deo requisita.” (Ibid., 61r.)

¹⁹ “Necessariam nihilominus dicimus esse haec iustitiam ... cum ista illam consequatur.” (Ibid.)

²⁰ “Et licet iustitiae haec Dei iustitiae non possit satisfacere ... et Deo placet et suas ab illo commendationes habet. ... Nec nos movere debet quod nihil dum hic vivimus agere possumus, non sordidum, mancum et vitio obnoxium ... quia per Christum iam certo scimus hanc legis inchoatam obedientiam patri nostro fore acceptam.” (Ibid.)

the faith, love, and hope of the faithful are increased, or the holy works are “the means through which we vindicate God’s gifts.”²¹ Without further elaborating on the possibility of this vindication, Vermigli stresses again that, crucially, holy works are not the reason why the faithful merit God’s rewards; on the contrary, the “foundation and root” of these rewards are faith and God’s mercy.²²

THE 1 CORINTHIANS *SCHOLIUM*

After this overview of the constructive teaching in Vermigli’s first *scholium* “*de iustificatione*,” let us now turn to the next instance where he treats the topic in a similar context, focusing especially on continuities and discontinuities with what we have seen so far. Vermigli’s ‘middle’ justification *scholium* is part of his lectures on 1 Corinthians.²³ He began lecturing on this epistle soon after he had arrived in Oxford in early 1548.²⁴ The systematic reflection of the *scholium* is triggered by 1 Cor 1:30, where Christ is said to have been made righteousness “for us.”

As in the Genesis *scholium*, here Vermigli also distinguishes three different semantic aspects of what it means for God to confer his righteousness. The first aspect is again related to the activity of the judges in the Old Testament who were commanded to ‘justify’ the innocent. A newly articulated distinction between human and Divine righteousness makes it possible, moreover, for Vermigli to connect this aspect not only to the remission of sins, but also to a kind of exchange in righteousness,

so that the sins we have committed against the divine law are not imputed to us unto death, but rather the obedience of Christ and his righteousness, which he provided by living and by dying, are imputed to us in such a way that whatever in our actions has fallen short of full and perfect righteousness may be restored fully by it.²⁵

²¹ “Possunt deinde facultates haberi quibus Dei dona et praemia nobis vendicamus.” (Ibid.)

²² Cf. “...non ut ipsa spectemus opera solum quibus haec dona Dei mereri dicimur, sed illorum fundamentum ac radicem fidem inquam et Dei misericordiam.” (Ibid.)

²³ Vermigli, *Ad Corinthios*, 29r–38v. An English translation of this scholium has been made available in *The Peter Martyr Reader* (Donnelly, James, and McLelland, *The Peter Martyr Reader*, 133–50.)

²⁴ James, “De Justificatione: The Evolution of Peter Martyr Vermigli’s Doctrine of Justification,” 207–9; Philip M. McNair, “Peter Martyr in England,” in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform*, ed. Joseph C. McLelland (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), 100–105.

²⁵ “Iustitia dei, quando nobis ab eo confertur ... affert remissionem peccatorum, ut nobis quae commisimus in divinam legem ad mortem non imputentur, sed potius e diverso obedientia Christi eiusque iustitia, quam hic vivendo et moriendo praestitit, ita nobis imputetur, ut ex ea quicquid actionibus nostris ad plenam atque perfectam iustitiam defuerit, resarciatur.” (Vermigli, *Ad Corinthios*, 29r-v; Donnelly, James, and McLelland, *The Peter Martyr Reader*, 135.)

As James rightly notes, the language of imputation is much more pronounced here than in the Genesis *scholium*.²⁶

The second aspect of justification – leading an upright and holy life – is described in terms very similar to the ones in the Genesis *scholium*. Vermigli’s understanding of the ‘third’ righteousness, however, has undergone a transformation. The focus is no longer on God’s rewards to the faithful, even though Vermigli still mentions them in the conclusion of the *scholium* (expressing the same ambivalence towards the concept as noted above²⁷). Instead, Vermigli now suggests that this aspect of righteousness consists in a righteousness inherent to the soul of the righteous, from the habit of good works.²⁸

After this initial overview of the different aspects of how God confers righteousness on human beings, Vermigli consciously narrows his investigation: “For the present we wish to set aside the other kinds of righteousness and examine only the first one listed.”²⁹ Let us note, *pace* James, that this by no means indicates that the other two aspects should not – in Vermigli’s view – be counted as part of God’s justifying action or as falling under the heading “*de iustificatione*.” Rather, it is clear from how he introduces his focus that he still keeps within his purview also the other aspects of justification as ways in which God justifies.

Much of the remainder of the *scholium* replicates his Genesis *scholium*. Vermigli refutes, for instance, the same errors regarding the power of the law and of ceremonies, as mentioned above. However, his treatment of the role and character of faith is substantiated in greater detail than before. This can be seen from what he calls the order of the causes of justification (*ordo causarum iustificationis*), which runs as follows: God, in his mercy, is its first cause. Its second cause is Christ, “who merited for us this mercy of God.” In the third place comes faith, “as the tool and instrument by which we grasp Christ,

²⁶ James, “De Justificatione: The Evolution of Peter Martyr Vermigli’s Doctrine of Justification,” 223.

²⁷ “Let us not deny that many rewards, both spiritual and temporal, are given for the good works of the faithful. We argue only that eternal life is given quite freely, although it is promised to those who lead a good life.” / “Et bonis operibus fidelium non inficiamur permulta praemia reddi, cum spiritualia tum temporalia. Tantum vitam aeternam licet repromittatur bene viventibus omnino gratis dari contendimus.” (Vermigli, *Ad Corinthios*, 38v; Donnelly, James, and McLelland, *The Peter Martyr Reader*, 149–50.)

²⁸ “Postremo loco derivatur ex consuetudine bonorum operum quaedam iustitia in animis nostris inhaerens.” (Vermigli, *Ad Corinthios*, 29v; Donnelly, James, and McLelland, *The Peter Martyr Reader*, 136.)

²⁹ “At in praesentia caeteris partibus omissis de ea tantum volumus agere, quam primo loco recensuimus.” (Vermigli, *Ad Corinthios*, 29v; Donnelly, James, and McLelland, *The Peter Martyr Reader*, 136.)

and together with him the mercy of God ..., whence we are justified.”³⁰ This hierarchy of causes allows Vermigli to argue – in continuity with the Genesis *scholium*, though more explicitly than there – that it is inappropriate to say that faith justifies in the same way as a human action, for “the source of justification comes from Christ, through God’s promises and mercy.”³¹

THE ROMANS *SCHOLIUM*

The third and final treatise on justification penned by Peter Martyr forms part of his Romans commentary. This commentary dates from his time as Regius Professor of Theology in Oxford, where he lectured on the letter to the Romans in 1550. After concluding his exposition of the first eleven chapters of the letter to the Romans, Vermigli chooses to “treat the topic of justification,” elaborating on the question: “are men justified by works or by faith?”³² This *scholium*, when compared with the other two, is significantly more polemical in tone. Vermigli openly addresses the following three main opponents: Richard Smith, his Catholic predecessor in Oxford;³³ the Dutchman Albert Pighius, in whom Vermigli sees one of the best defenders of the Catholic position, especially because he tends to defend it on the basis of Scripture;³⁴ and, finally, the fathers of the council of Trent. This is Vermigli’s first extensive interaction with the decree on justification that the Council of Trent issued in January 1547.³⁵

³⁰ “Primum sane constituatur deum esse qui nos iustificat, suam misericordiam et promissiones clementer impartiendo. Occurrit deinde Christus, qui nobis hanc dei misericordiam et salutis promissionem commeritus est, dum pro nobis poenas tulit, quas ipsi eramus perpessuri. Succedit fides tertio loco, ut organum et instrumentum quo Christum percipimus et pariter cum eo dei misericordiam salutaesque promissiones unde iustificamur.” (Vermigli, *Ad Corinthios*, 34r; Donnelly, James, and McLelland, *The Peter Martyr Reader*, 143.)

³¹ “Nec omittendum nequaquam fidei convenire ut nos iustificet qua nostra est actio. ... Sed caput iustificationis a Christo est promissionibus atque misericordia dei.” (Vermigli, *Ad Corinthios*, 34v; Donnelly, James, and McLelland, *The Peter Martyr Reader*, 145.)

³² “... de iustificatione qua scopus est et finis omnium quae Paulus tractare. Quaestio vero his verbis proponetur: Iustificentur ne homines operibus, an fide?” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 517; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 87.)

³³ On the relationship between Vermigli and Smith, see McNair, “Peter Martyr in England,” 92; 104-5; J. Andreas Löwe, “Peter Martyr Vermigli and Richard Smith’s *De votis monasticis*,” in *Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism, Republicanism, Reformation*, ed. Emidio Campi (Genève: Droz, 2002). On Smith more broadly, see J. Andreas Löwe, *Richard Smyth and the Language of Orthodoxy: Re-Imagining Tudor Catholic Polemicism* (Leiden: Brill, 2003).

³⁴ Cf. Frank A. James, “The Complex of Justification: Peter Martyr Vermigli versus Albert Pighius,” in *Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism, Republicanism, Reformation*, ed. Emidio Campi (Genève: Droz, 2002), 47 n. 15.

³⁵ Cf. Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 546–48.

Vermigli opens this *scholium* by explaining that when God justifies a human being, this can mean either of two things: it refers to the act of causing someone to be just either *in re* or *in existimatione* (in fact or in judgement). As shorthand I shall call these Rom I and Rom II respectively. Rom II is roughly identical to the ‘first’ righteousness of the Genesis *scholium* and (especially) the 1 Corinthians-*scholium*. Its focus is on forgiveness of sins and on “ascribing and imputing righteousness,” so that to justify means “that through judgment, words, witness, or assertion one counts the person just (*pro iusto habere*).”³⁶ However, Vermigli further subdivides Rom I (justification *in re*) into two separate aspects: when God justifies “in reality,” he endows human beings with his Spirit and renews them fully. God’s righteousness therefore is within their souls and adheres to them by God’s goodness through Christ (Rom IA). Thus, this bestowal of God’s righteousness intrinsically affects the believers, indeed effecting a change in their very being. Secondly, when God has renewed human beings in this way, Vermigli explains, he also grants them right and holy works. By their frequent use, there is born in human beings a habit by which they are “inclined to right and holy living” (Rom IB).³⁷

The most significant innovation of this *scholium* when compared to the two previous ones is the introduction of Rom IA. The idea that Christ’s righteousness is given to human beings through the Spirit in such a way that they are intrinsically transformed, is new, depending on how one reads the multi-faceted first righteousness of the Genesis *scholium*. Vermigli now proposes a way of understanding God’s justifying action as more than merely forensic; namely, as a gift that has the power to transform its recipient. This kind of justification is prior to, or more fundamental than the justification that manifests itself in good works (Rom IB). It is therefore Rom IB (and not Rom IA) that is the equivalent of the second righteousness of the Genesis *scholium*, as well as both the second and the third righteousness in the 1 Corinthians *scholium*.

Vermigli continues by asking: since there are these two significations of being justified, namely either *in re* or *in existimatione*,

³⁶ “Interdum vero iustificat Deus absolvendo a peccatis, adscribendo et imputando iustitiam. ... Estque iustificare iudicio, verbis, testimonio et assertione aliquem pro iusto habere.” (Ibid., 517; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 87–88.)

³⁷ “Haec prima est iustitia, quae animis nostris Dei beneficio per Christum inest et adhaeret. Deinde cum iam ipsos sic restituit ac refinxit, opera largitur recta et sancta, quorum usu atque frequentia paritur in animo nostro qualitas, vel ut dicunt habitum, quo propensi efficimur ad probe sancteque vivendum.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 517; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 517.)

and since the same God is author of both, which of the two should we follow in the proposed discussion? The latter, precisely because the renewal infused by the Spirit of God and our righteousness, insofar as [it is] a habit acquired from good works, are imperfect and lacking as long as we live here, so that if it was to be arbitrated, we would not at all be able to stand before the divine judgement seat by virtue of them.³⁸

This passage is crucial, and two things about it should be noted. First, Vermigli limits the scope of his examination to justification *in existimatione*. As we have seen above, he does the same in the 1 Corinthians *scholium*. As is the case there, however, so here too it is not clear that this narrowing is more than a rhetorical choice to focus on the one instead of the other. *Pace* James, there is no indication that Vermigli no longer “incorporate[s] regeneration and sanctification under the rubric of justification.”³⁹ As we have seen above, Vermigli writes that there are two scriptural meanings of “to justify,” and even though he gives priority to forensic justification “in the proposed discussion,” he clearly affirms that God is the author of *both* a forensic and a real (infused and formative) justification.⁴⁰ The same can be seen from the way in which Vermigli introduces the two options: he holds that God *sometimes* brings forth actual righteousness in human beings, and *sometimes* he justifies by imputing righteousness (*interdum ... interdum*).⁴¹ This construction demands that justification *in re* is an actual possibility for Vermigli, despite his not focussing on this in the *scholium*. In sum, Vermigli holds that God does his justificatory work in both ways: through counting human beings just, but *also* through making them just intrinsically.

Nonetheless – and this is the second point to note – Vermigli raises a clear *caveat* in the quotation above: justification in the sense of Rom II has a priority over what we have called Rom IA and Rom IB with regard to its ‘value’ in the Divine judgement. In order for human beings to stand firm in God’s judgement, God must forensically hold them to

³⁸ “Cumque sint duo haec significata iustificandi, scilicet, aut re, aut existimatione, ac utriusque Deus idem sit author, utrum ex duobus in disputatione proposita sequemur? Posterius, idque propterea quod renovatio Dei spiritu afflata, et iustitia nostra quoad habitum ex bonis operibus acquisitum, adeo sunt dum hic vivimus imperfecta et manca ut per ea, si disceptandum sit, at tribunal divinum minime possimus persistere.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 517; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 88.)

³⁹ James, “De Justificatione: The Evolution of Peter Martyr Vermigli’s Doctrine of Justification,” 330.

⁴⁰ Note that James himself concedes this when he states later on that “Vermigli continues to maintain that the biblical meaning of righteousness should be understood in two ways: sometimes it means ‘to produce righteousness in people’ and at other times it can mean to ‘regard one as righteous.’” *Ibid.*, 339.

⁴¹ Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 517.

be just. The crux of Vermigli's argument here is closely related to his discussion of the Council of Trent's decree on justification. When discussing the causes of justification as enumerated by the Council of Trent, he finds nothing to object to in its definition of the final, efficient and meritorious causes of justification. He agrees that its final cause is the glory of God and the salvation of human beings, its efficient cause God with respect to his mercy, and the meritorious cause Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection. "So far this is not bad," Vermigli judges.⁴² However, he takes issue with the Council's assertion that (in Vermigli's own words) "the formal cause is the justice of God, not that justice by which he himself is just, but that which he communicates to us, by which we are both truly counted just and are just in fact."⁴³ Vermigli states that he does not deny that the communication of God's righteousness happens "in one already justified," but that he cannot accept that justification itself should "consist in that righteousness and renewal by which we are created anew by God. For it is imperfect because of our corruption, so that we are not able to stand before the judgement of Christ."⁴⁴ It would seem, therefore, that when justification *in re* is given to the believer, it needs to be supplemented by an imputed righteousness, in order for human beings to avoid condemnation. The core of the matter seems to be not so much in the reality of God's gifts, but in the human capability of accepting them. What Vermigli seems to be saying is that the Spirit-infused, transformative righteousness given by God to human beings cannot fully take hold in them because of their fallen state. This echoes the imagery of the poisoned jars that we have encountered in Chapter One.

What, however, is the role of faith? In the Romans *scholium*, Vermigli defines faith as a "firm and assured assent of the mind to the words of God, an assent inspired by the Holy Spirit to the salvation of believers."⁴⁵ As he often does with definitions, Vermigli

⁴² "Atque huc quidem usque non male." (Ibid., 548; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 159.)

⁴³ "Causam formalem dicunt esse iustitiam Dei, non eam, qua ipse iustus est, sed quam nobis communicat, qua ipsi vere et habeamur, et simus iusti." (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 548; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 159.)

⁴⁴ "Quae nos fieri in homine iam iustificato non negamus. ... Idcirco autem dicimus, in ea iustitia et instauratione qua reformamur a Deo non posse esse iustificationem quod ea nostro vitio imperfecta sit, neque possimus cum ea ad tribunal Christi consistere." (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 548; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 159.)

⁴⁵ "Est itaque firmus certusque animi assensus verbis Dei a spiritu divino afflatus ad salutem credentium." (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 518; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 90.) Eric Parker situates this definition of faith in the context of its various medieval understandings, especially in its relationship to

expounds this definition according to the four Aristotelian causes. The material cause of faith, he says, is the word of God, its formal cause is our assent, its efficient cause God's inspiration through the Spirit, and its final cause the salvation of believers. What is most remarkable about this four-fold distinction is that Vermigli holds one of the four causes of faith – the formal cause – to be exclusively human: "We need not doubt its formal cause because it is defined to be an assent."⁴⁶ This introduces the possibility of there being an element of faith that is purely human (even if only theoretically so, because presumably all four causes are always present at the same time). Does he not risk being at the brink of slipping into a kind of semi-Pelagianism with this? If at least one element of faith can theoretically stand independently of God, would this not make it into a kind of work? And are fallen human beings, through unable fully to receive God's gifts, capable of having such faith?

As if to reply to such questions, Vermigli adds:

If faith itself is considered our work, we cannot be justified by it, since as a work it is imperfect and flawed, far beneath what the law requires. But we are said to be justified by it [faith] because through it we take hold (*apprehendimus*) of the promises of God and the righteousness and merits of Christ and apply them to ourselves.⁴⁷

Despite this relativisation, however, the subject of this apprehension remains the human being, the 'we' in the quote given. Insofar as faith is therefore something human, there is a potential tension between faith as the crucial prerequisite for justification, on the one hand, and Vermigli's strong assertion that there is nothing human beings can do to further their justification, on the other hand. I will return to this tension in section three below.

Another tension that emerges from the Romans *scholium* is the following: Vermigli maintains that God's gift of justification cannot be fully received by human beings, as we

virtue. See Eric M. Parker, "Fides Mater Virtutum Est: Peter Martyr Vermigli's Disagreement with Thomas Aquinas on the 'Form' of the Virtues," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 15, no. 1 (2013): 54–67.

⁴⁶ "De forma etiam non ambiguitur, quia definitur esse assensus." (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 518; James, "Romans Commentary: Justification and Sanctification," 90.)

⁴⁷ "Quin etiam si fides ipsa qua nostrum opus est consideretur, ea iustificari non possumus, cum opus sit et mancum et imperfectum, longe deterius quam lex requirat. Sed illa iustificari dicimur, qua promissiones Dei et Christi iustitiam meritaque per ipsam apprehendimus et nobis applicamus." (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 521; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 96.) The notion that faith is the power to apprehend God's gifts is present in Vermigli's thought already in his Genesis *scholium*, where – as seen above – he calls faith the "disposition or faculty, through which we are capable of ... righteousness and through which we apprehend" it ("dispositionem et facultatem cuiuslibet iustitiae ... sumus capaces, illasque apprehendimus" (Vermigli, *In primum librum Mosi, qui volgo Genesis dicitur commentarii doctissimi*, 60v.).

have seen; yet he nonetheless claims that there is a legitimate place for justification *in re*, an intrinsic justification.⁴⁸ Put differently: Vermigli endorses the possibility of a justification *in re* and yet is hesitant towards it insofar as he emphasizes that it is imperfect, which calls for grace to be given through an imposition. Both of this taken together suggests that, for him, God's grace is somehow given both intrinsically and extrinsically.

Christopher Castaldo has concluded from this that Vermigli's doctrine of justification can be summarised as a *duplex iustitia* or a double justification.⁴⁹ According to Alister McGrath, this doctrine, which has become associated with the views of Gasparo Contarini (1483-1542) and the Regensburg Colloquy of 1541, essentially proposes a double formal cause of justification, a *iustitia imputata* and a *iustitia inhaerens*.⁵⁰ But it seems that Castaldo does not agree with this definition, because he also holds that "Vermigli would fervently protest" against the "inclusion of internal renewal along with forensic imputation in the formal cause of justification."⁵¹ Castaldo thus relativizes the value of the concept of a double justification when describing Vermigli's theology. The usefulness of describing Vermigli's doctrine of justification by means of *duplex iustitia*, it seems, depends entirely on one's definition of *duplex iustitia*. Moreover, from what we have seen of Vermigli's position in the Romans *scholium*, Castaldo's assertion that Vermigli would fervently protested against anything other than a forensic cause of justification is not entirely warranted. What is warranted, however, is to see in Vermigli's theology of justification a certain plurality – the plurality which Castaldo tried to express

⁴⁸ Not even Frank A. James can escape this complexity. He writes: "On the one hand, regeneration is the direct cause of sanctification and the doing of good deeds. On the other hand, *regeneration, although logically prior, is not the basis for forensic justification*. The ground for forensic justification is the righteousness of Christ alone. Thus, the relationship between regeneration and justification is not exactly the same as the relationship between regeneration and sanctification. In the case of sanctification, regeneration may be said to be the basis and cause for good deeds. But as for justification, regeneration functions as the context (not cause) for the divine acquittal." (James, "De Justificatione: The Evolution of Peter Martyr Vermigli's Doctrine of Justification," 345 [emphasis mine]). This attempt at smoothing over the tension is less than convincing, for how can something be logically prior while at the same time not being the basis (however understood) for what follows? What exactly, moreover, is meant by "context (not cause)" for the Divine acquittal? This clarification obscures the matter rather than illuminating it.

⁴⁹ Christopher A. Castaldo, "The Grammar of Justification: The Doctrines of Peter Martyr Vermigli and John Henry Newman and Their Ecumenical Implications" (PhD thesis, Middlesex University / London School of Theology, 2015), 80–84.

⁵⁰ Cf. Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 231–32.

⁵¹ Castaldo, "The Grammar of Justification," 189.

through the term *duplex iustitia*. I will, in what follows, offer a more precise definition of this plurality. In particular, I will propose that there is an aporia in Vermigli's notion of the way God bestows his gifts to human beings. The aporetic nature of this gift-giving will come to the fore more clearly, however, through an examination of what Vermigli writes about the believer's union with Christ. To this we shall now turn.

2) A Secret Middle: Vermigli's Teaching on Union with Christ

In *The Visible Words of God*, the first twentieth-century monograph devoted to Vermigli's theology, Joseph McLelland writes that "the doctrine of union with Christ is the dynamic of Peter Martyr's theology."⁵² This assessment still holds true, especially for his understanding of justification. As we shall see, Vermigli's notion of how human beings can be united to Christ lies at the heart of his understanding of the workings of grace. Indeed, his writings concerning the justification of human beings cannot be adequately understood unless they are set in the context of what he writes about the different unions that are possible between human beings and Christ.

We can take a first cue from a more recent interpreter, J. V. Fesko, who has argued that for Vermigli, justification (of a kind that is not further specified) is to be understood as part of the believer's "mystical union" with Christ.⁵³ What, however, is this mystical union? Vermigli presents his thought on the various kinds and degrees of union with Christ comprehensively in two letters stemming from 1555, written to Calvin and to Beza respectively.⁵⁴

⁵² Joseph C. McLelland, *The Visible Words of God: An Exposition of the Sacramental Theology of Peter Martyr Vermigli* (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1957), 142.

⁵³ J. V. Fesko, *Beyond Calvin: Union with Christ and Justification in Early Modern Reformed Theology (1517–1700)* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 200–206.

⁵⁴ The letter to Calvin, written from Strasbourg on 8 March 1555 can be found in the appendix to the 1583 Latin edition of the *loci communes*. See Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Loci Communes (1583)*, ed. Robert Masson (London: Th. Vautrollerius, 1583), 1094–96. A translation can be found in Joseph C. McLelland and G. E. Duffield, eds., *The Life, Early Letters and Eucharistic Writings of Peter Martyr* (Oxford: Sutton Courtenay Press, 1989), 343–48. The other letter, written shortly afterwards to Theodore Beza (a friend and student of Calvin's, and a Reformer of Lausanne), is equally part of the appendix to the 1583 Latin edition of the *loci* (Vermigli, *Loci Communes (1583)*, 1108–9.) A translation of this letter can be found in Vermigli, *Life, Letters, and Sermons*, 134–37. – For a commentary on the letters see also Christian Moser, "Epistolary: Theological Themes," in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank A. James (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 433–55; (and on the letter to Calvin only) W. Duncan Rankin, "Calvin's Correspondence on Our Threefold Union with Christ," in *The Hope Fulfilled: Essays in Honor of O. Palmer Robertson*, ed. Robert L. Penny (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2008), 232–50.

Vermigli distinguishes between three degrees of union with Christ. He terms the first of them “natural,” following Hebrews 2:14 (“Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things”).⁵⁵ This first, natural union with Christ is “not restricted to Christians”; indeed, Vermigli thinks that “Jews, Turks and everyone included in a census of human beings are joined with Christ in this way.”⁵⁶ As McLelland notes, this indicates that, for Vermigli, “the incarnation was the preparation for communicating a new humanity to men.”⁵⁷ The fact that he includes this dimension in his teaching on union with Christ testifies to the importance of the notion of Christ as an exemplar for humanity, which, as Klaus Sturm has shown, is a central aspect of his Christology.⁵⁸

However, this ‘natural’ union is only a step towards a more intensified union with Christ, which only believers can attain, a union which Vermigli calls ‘spiritual’. The *telos* of this spiritual union is the restoration of human beings to their original dignity. This regeneration finds its ultimate fulfilment in the eschaton. It is evident that Vermigli associates this spiritual union with a progressive process of actual regeneration that already begins in this life, as he writes in the letter to Beza: “We begin while living here to have that nature developed and we will have it more restored day by day and finally perfected when we reach the blessed resurrection.”⁵⁹ It is worth quoting a passage on this spiritual union from Vermigli’s letter to Calvin in full:

Thus are [the elect] not only forgiven their sins and reconciled to God (in which the true and solid method of justification consists) but further there is added a renewing power of the spirit, by which our bodies also – flesh, blood and nature – are made capable of immortality, and become daily more and more in Christ's form (*Christiformia*) as I may say. Not that they cast aside the substance of their own nature and pass into the very body and flesh of Christ, but that they no less approach him in spiritual gifts and

⁵⁵ Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1094.

⁵⁶ “Coniunctio eiusdem naturae ... non tamen Christianis est propria, sic enim Iudaei, Turcae et quotquot hominum censu comprahenduntur cum Christo coniunguntur.” (Ibid., 1108.)

⁵⁷ McLelland, *The Visible Words of God*, 143.

⁵⁸ “Christus hat durch seine Menschwerdung die Natur aller, die mit ihm im Glauben verbunden sind, rein gemacht. Er hat, sich unter der menschlichen Natur verbergend, in seinem Leben Beispiele vollkommener Gerechtigkeit gegeben. Ein Muster (exemplar) von Reinheit hat er durch das Anziehen der menschlichen Natur ..., die er dadurch rein machte, dargestellt.” Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermigli*, 133.

⁵⁹ “Donis coelestis quae credendo sumus assequuti exultam habere hic vivendo incipimus et magis instauraram indies habebimus, ac denique perfectam cum ad beatam resurrectionem pervenerimus.” (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1109.) See on this also Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermigli*, 209–10.

properties than at birth they naturally communicated with him in body, flesh and blood.⁶⁰

This spiritual union takes place when believers are “made holy, just, and adorned with divine properties” through their union with Christ, as Vermigli puts it in the other letter. They stand no longer in their “unsteady and weak flesh,” but “are clothed in Christ’s flesh” and “live and move in the soul of Christ.”⁶¹ In short, the two principal unions with Christ that Vermigli recognises are (1) a natural union that all human beings receive at birth and (2) a spiritual union that believers embrace by the help of the Holy Spirit and that signifies their regeneration into the image of Christ.

Crucially, Vermigli posits also a third union with Christ, which shall be, for my present purposes, the main focus. He teaches that there is an intermediate union between the two unions described above; indeed, that there has to be “a middle,” which is secret, “between the beginning and end of this kind of communion.”⁶² He refers to this middle between the natural and spiritual unions with Christ not only as “secret,” but also as “mystical,”⁶³ or as a “union ... of a hidden mystery.”⁶⁴ This secret and mystical union,

is the fount and origin of all the heavenly and spiritual likeness which we have with Christ. It is that by which, as soon as we believe, we obtain Christ himself as our true Head, and are made his members. Whence, from the Head himself as Paul says [in Eph. 4:16] his Spirit flows and is derived through the joints and ligaments into ourselves as his true and legitimate members. Wherefore this communion with our Head is prior, in nature at least though perhaps not in time, to that later communion which is introduced through regeneration.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ “Atque illis non tantum condonari peccata et Deo reconciliari, qua in re vera et solida iustificationis ratio sita est, sed etiam spiritus vim instaurantem addi, qua nostra quoque corpora, caro, sanguis et natura immortalitatis capacia fiunt et Christiformia (ut ita dixerim) indies magis ac magis evadunt. Non quod substantiam suae naturae abiiciant et reipsa in corpus atque carnem Christi transeant, sed quod spiritualibus donis atque proprietatibus notn minus ad illum accedant, quam corpore carne ac sanguine cum eo iam ab ipsa nativitate naturaliter communicaverint.” (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1095.)

⁶¹ “[E]fficimur sancti, iusti, proprietatibus divinis ornati ... Unde non amplius nostra infirma et imbecilla carne ... constamus, verum Christi carne vestimur, ... Christi animo vivimus et movemur.” (Ibid., 1108.)

⁶² “Caeterum inter initium finemque huiusmodi communionis, medium est necesse ... quod arcanum est.” (Ibid., 1109.)

⁶³ “communionem ... mysticam;” “illum medium, arcanum, mysticumque” (Ibid.) “communionem ... mysticam” (Ibid., 1095.)

⁶⁴ “[H]anc mediam ... arcani mysterii dici potest.” (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1109.)

⁶⁵ “[I]nter has duas mediam esse, quae sit fons et origo omnis coelestis et spiritualis similitudinis quam cum Christo adipiscimur. Et ea est qua statim cum credimus Christum ipsum vere caput nostrum nanciscimur efficimurque ipsius membra. Unde ab ipso capite per compagines et commissuras (ut inquit Paulus) spiritus eius in nos tanquam in sua vera legitimaque membra fluit ac derivatur. Proinde communio haec nostra cum

What should be emphasised about the character of this secret or mystical union between the believer and Christ is that Vermigli consistently refers to it in terms of physical metaphors, especially the head-and-members metaphor. The passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians alluded to above is his prime reference in this regard. In the letter to Beza, Vermigli expressly states that this metaphor of Christ as the head and the believers as his members is the way in which the Scriptures hint at the mystery of this union – together, that is, with the metaphor of husband and wife (here, Vermigli is presumably referring to Eph 5:23: "For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church").⁶⁶

What does the physicality of these metaphors mean for understanding of the mystical union? It seems that for Vermigli, they provide a means of envisioning a mystery that otherwise escapes words. We may nevertheless infer something about the mystery from the metaphors. The head-and-members metaphor bespeaks a joining of the faithful to Christ, who is their head. By the mystical union, Christ is made theirs, and they are made his, as Vermigli teaches. This means that it is necessary to envisage a moment when this 'integration' or engrafting happens. In fact, there are strong reasons for believing that the mystical union *is* the very moment of this integration. This is suggested by the fact that, for Vermigli, the spiritual union with Christ becomes possible only once the mystical union has been effected. Once the Christian is connected to Christ by this mystery, Vermigli teaches, a connection between head and body is established: the believer has become – as Vermigli repeatedly phrases it – "flesh of his flesh and bones of his bones."⁶⁷ With this connection established, from the head "various gifts, heavenly benefits, and divine properties flow down into" the believers, furthering more and more their spiritual union with Christ.⁶⁸

Does Vermigli also envisage a *temporal* sequence, by which the spiritual union follows the mystical union? This is unlikely. As is evident from the quotation above, he is hesitant to postulate a purely temporal 'before' and 'after', saying that the mystical union

capite prior est saltem natura licet fortasse non tempore, illa posteriori communione quae per instaurationem inducitur." (Ibid., 1095.)

⁶⁶ Ibid., 1109.

⁶⁷ This turn of phrase is used in both letters: Ibid., 1095; 1109.

⁶⁸ "[V]aria dona, beneficia coelestia, divinaeque proprietates in nos derivantur." Ibid., 1109.

“is prior” to the spiritual union “in nature ... though perhaps not in time.”⁶⁹ This means that the sequence from the believers’ ‘mystical’ engrafting to their spiritual union with Christ does not necessarily have to be envisaged temporally. The one is indeed prior to the other, but this priority can be a priority of ‘nature’ and is not necessarily one of time. This suggestion is significant, as Vermigli is elsewhere prone to temporal sequences in the workings of grace. In the Romans *scholium* on justification, for instance, he sets apart the human works done *before* regeneration (which are bound to be sinful) from those done *after*.⁷⁰ Similarly, we have seen in Chapter One how the main distinction between different ways in which God works in human actions functions on the temporal plane. Given this, Vermigli’s comment, that the relation between mystical and spiritual union is not necessarily one of temporal succession, is remarkable.

Vermigli’s teaching on justification and his conception of the believer’s union with Christ address the same question: how God bestows his grace upon human beings. As we have just seen with regard to its relationship to a temporal sequence, however, his approach to how this gift is given differs between the two contexts. More differences emerge when one compares Vermigli’s answer to how God bestows his grace in the context of his teaching on justification, on the one hand, and in the context of his doctrine of the believer’s union with Christ, on the other hand. Indeed, an integration of Vermigli’s doctrines of justification and union with Christ will bring to the fore tensions in his teaching on the workings of grace. It is the task of the next section to uncover these tensions.

3) The Aporetic Nature of Vermigli’s Teaching on the Workings of Grace

What is the relationship, for Vermigli, between the believers’ union with Christ and their justification? Given that he distinguishes different kinds of justification, and three kinds of unions with Christ, an answer to this question ought to consider these subcategories. In two cases, it is possible to align one kind of union with Christ straightforwardly with one aspect of what it means for God to justify.

⁶⁹ “Proinde communio haec nostra cum capite prior est saltem natura licet fortasse non tempore.” (Ibid., 1095.)

⁷⁰ “Adhuc tempus, quo eduntur opera est distinguendum: nam quaedam fiunt antequam iustificemur, simusque beneficium regenerationis consequuti, alia vero sequuntur, habenturque ut fructus novae vitae, atque iustitiae inchoatae.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 520.)

First, Vermigli's teaching on the spiritual union of the elect with Christ coincides with the kind of righteousness through which the faithful bring forth good and holy works, which is the second aspect of justification in the Genesis and 1 Corinthians *scholia*, as well as what I termed Rom IB. The gift of God's grace is in both these cases associated with an intrinsic transformation of the faithful, which bears its visible fruit in the holiness of their lives. Moreover, both this bestowal of righteousness and the union with Christ in question have the character of a dynamic process rather than indicating a moment in time or a stasis: Vermigli makes clear that the 'second'/Rom IB righteousness can be augmented through frequent repetition, eventually leading to a habit. Similarly, the spiritual union with Christ is processual, gradually leading to more and more similarity with Christ. There is, however, a difference in how much this process is oriented towards the beatific vision. This orientation is made more explicit in the case of the spiritual union with Christ than in the context of the second (or Rom IB) justification.

Secondly, Vermigli's mystical or secret union coincides with Rom IA, the justification through which believers are endowed with the Spirit of God. This can be seen, first, from the way in which Vermigli describes both as moments in which the believer is partly lifted out of his or her fallen human nature. In the Romans *scholium*, Vermigli states that through this justification, God endows human beings with his Spirit and "renews them fully by restoring the strength of their minds and by retrieving their human faculties from the greater part of their natural corruption."⁷¹ Similarly, the integration in Christ that is effected through the mystical union means for Vermigli that "we are lifted up from the level of nature so that we are joined to Christ even as members are joined to their head."⁷² However, it is not only the language of an elevation out of the fallen human nature that indicates a parallel between Rom IA and the mystical union, but also, secondly, their character as the *beginning* of a process. We have seen that both spiritual union and Rom IB have a processual character. Accordingly, mystical union and Rom IA are both the beginnings of these processes, even if not necessarily through a temporal sequence: Rom IA is the condition for Rom IB ("second, *when he has fashioned and renewed them in this*

⁷¹ "Cum suo spiritu illos refingit, totosque renovat, instaurando vires animi eorum et a bona parte natae labis humanas facultates afferendo." (Ibid., 517.)

⁷² "A naturae itaque gradu per fidem attollimur, ut Christo ceu membra capiti suo iungamur." (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1109.)

way, he gives right and holy works ...")⁷³ as much as the secret mystical union is the condition for the spiritual union (it is "prior, in nature at least though perhaps not in time," as seen above).⁷⁴

In sum, we can conclude that the two aspects of the justification *in re* of the Romans *scholium* parallel the mystical and spiritual unions with Christ both regarding their individual elements and concerning their respective relation or "proportion" to each other. It indeed seems warranted to say that when Vermigli writes of the two *in re* aspects of God's bestowal of righteousness in the Romans *scholium*, he thinks of what he will later call two different degrees of the believer's union with Christ: mystical and spiritual.

The question remains, however, how we are to understand the relationship between the mystical union with Christ of Vermigli's letters, and the forensic counting-to-be-just of Rom II (or the first aspects of righteousness in the Genesis and 1 Corinthians *scholia*). A recent debate in Calvin scholarship is illuminating regarding this question. A number of commentators have argued that the doctrine of union with Christ is the real core of Calvin's theology of grace, in contrast to the more traditional view, which deemed that forensic justification and an ensuing clear-cut order of salvation – first justification, then sanctification, then glorification, etc. – was of primary importance to Calvin.⁷⁵ In the more traditional view, union with Christ is secondary in importance in the *ordo salutis*. J. V. Fesko has recently made a case for this more traditional view in a monograph on the doctrines of union with Christ and justification in early modern Reformed theology. In a chapter devoted to Vermigli, he takes issue with Mark Garcia over how best to understand Vermigli's letters on union with Christ in relation to his teaching on justification.⁷⁶ Garcia argues that for Vermigli, the mystical union with Christ is an engrafting into Christ by faith, from which then flows the spiritual union which has the twofold blessing of justification

⁷³ "Deinde cum iam ipsos sic restituit ac refinxit, opera largitur recta et sancta." (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 517.)

⁷⁴ "Proinde communio haec nostra cum capite prior est saltem natura licet fortasse non tempore." (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1095.)

⁷⁵ Dennis E. Tamburello, *Union with Christ: John Calvin and the Mysticism of St. Bernard*, 1st ed. (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994); Mark A. Garcia, *Life in Christ: Union with Christ and Twofold Grace in Calvin's Theology* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2008); John McClean, "Perichoresis, Theosis and Union with Christ in the Thought of John Calvin," *The Reformed Theological Review* 68, no. 2 (2009): 130–41; Julie Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder: A Spiritual Theology of Ascent and Ascension* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010).

⁷⁶ Fesko, *Beyond Calvin: Union with Christ and Justification in Early Modern Reformed Theology (1517–1700)*, esp. 188–206.

and sanctification.⁷⁷ This means that, for Garcia, justification and sanctification “are distinct but inseparable graces that come to us simultaneously in our union with Christ.”⁷⁸ In contrast to this, Fesko argues that for Vermigli, the believer’s union with Christ is “dissected,”⁷⁹ meaning that for him there is a clear sequence in the *ordo salutis*. This order starts with a “predestinarian union,” followed by an “incarnational union,” and finally a “mystical union.” As a subcategory under the heading of mystical union, Fesko’s Vermigli subsumes first “regeneration” and then “justification.” All of this is logically succeeded by the “spiritual union” that is comprised of “renovation,” “sanctification,” and “glorification.”⁸⁰ Fesko does not directly specify to which of Vermigli’s various aspects of justification he refers; however, it is implied at various points in his argument that what he means is a forensic justification.⁸¹

While this is not the place to enter directly into this debate among scholars of Calvin, let us nonetheless note one consequence of Fesko’s interpretation of Vermigli. Fesko’s argument implies that Vermigli’s mystical union may not only be associated with the bestowal of righteousness of Rom I A (as we have argued above), but *also* with the forensic understanding of Rom II. Fesko argues that the moment of ‘integration’ into Christ, which, as we have seen, characterises the mystical or secret union, really is the moment in which God absolves the believers from their sins and counts them just through imputing Christ’s righteousness to them. As much as one might perhaps want to question the fruitfulness of Fesko’s hermeneutics of “dissection” and his insistence on strictly temporal sequences, there are reasons to believe that his interpretation here is correct.

On the one hand, both the mystical union and forensic justification designate, for Vermigli, a crucial moment of fundamental change in the life of the believer. This change takes the form, in one case, of a newly found conjunction with Christ and, in the other case, of a newly found remission of sins. It seems conceivable, and indeed plausible, that this refers to one and the same moment and one and the same change, not two independent changes. On the other hand, Vermigli himself suggests such a coincidence,

⁷⁷ Garcia, *Life in Christ*, 273–87.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁷⁹ So the title of his chapter on Vermigli: “Union with Christ Dissected”. Fesko, *Beyond Calvin: Union with Christ and Justification in Early Modern Reformed Theology (1517–1700)*, 188–206.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 200.

⁸¹ He writes for instance that Vermigli is “very careful to preserve the forensic *nature* of justification and fence it from the believer’s good works.” *Ibid.* (emphasis mine).

in a passage that we have already partly encountered in our exposition above. When explaining his threefold distinction in the unions with Christ, right after describing the natural union, he adds:

So besides that communion this is added, that in due season faith is breathed into the elect whereby they may believe in Christ. Thus are they not only forgiven their sins and reconciled to God (in which the true and solid method of justification consists) but further there is added a renewing power of the spirit.⁸²

The ‘addition’ of the power of the Holy Spirit refers to the spiritual union. Therefore, that which precedes it must denote the ‘opening’ of this spiritual union, which, as we have seen, is the mystical union. This means that in the quotation above, Vermigli maintains that the mystical union consists in “the true and solid method of justification.” It seems likely that he refers to a forensic justification here because he characterises it a) as an extrinsic bestowal of faith (“breathed into”), and b) as an acquittal of sin and reconciliation with God, both of which evoke ‘forensic’ connotations.

However, if it is true that, for Vermigli, the forensic justification of Rom II coincides with the mystical union, and if it is equally the case – as we have shown above – that the mystical union is the same as the incipient internal justification of Rom IA, then we are faced with an aporia. For this means that the believers’ change, which Vermigli dubs their “mystical union” with Christ, is simultaneously extrinsic (as Vermigli insists Rom II is) and intrinsic (like Rom IA). As a result, understanding the Romans *scholium* is not as straightforward as it might seem, for ‘through the detour’ of their respective equations with the mystical union, Rom IA and Rom II coincide. The same is true for Vermigli’s notion of a “forensic” justification, which now paradoxically coincides with a justification *in re*. This coincidence of an intrinsic and an extrinsic gift of grace, I venture, points to an aporia at the heart of Vermigli’s understanding of the way God’s grace is given.

Nota bene, this gift does not concern whether human beings are “just” in the sense that they will not commit sinful acts after they have been justified or united with Christ. Vermigli could not be further from suggesting that justified human beings are perfect. Rather, the gift of grace that we have found to be aporetic relates to a more fundamental

⁸² “Ideo praeter illam hoc accedit, electis destinato tempore fidem adspirari, qua in Christum credant, atque illis non tantum condonari peccata et Deo reconciliari, qua in re vera et solida iustificationis ratio sita est, sed etiam spiritus vim instaurantem addi.” (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1095.)

‘making right’ of the relationship between God and human beings. Another way of framing this would be to say that it concerns original sin, and the way this sin is (or is not) taken away. As we have seen in chapter one, however, Vermigli’s stance on whether original sin is taken away in baptism through faith somehow wavers. For while Vermigli holds that the guilt of original sin is forgiven in baptism and through faith in Christ, neither baptism nor faith do away with the fact that human beings are ‘originally’ sinful, for Vermigli. Insisting that “it is not perfectly true that original sin is abolished in the believers and in those who are baptised,” he holds that “the matter of sin still remains,” even though it is “broken and of little force.”⁸³ This wavering in Vermigli’s position on whether original sin is taken away in baptism foreshadows the aporia we have now encountered. Or, to put this differently: the aporia concerns the fact that when considering God’s gift of ‘making right’ his relationship with human beings, Vermigli sometimes – but not always – holds that this gift is given such that it takes away original sin. The reason that he does not always hold this, is that he shifts the focus to the conditions of possibility of receiving the gift. His reasoning for saying so – as seen in the context of his teaching on original sin – is that experience teaches that “the corruption of nature remains” and that human beings hence are “unapt for divine things,” unable to receive God’s gifts.⁸⁴

The crux of the aporia we have encountered therefore lies in the question whether God’s gift of grace can be *received as such* by human beings. Christopher Castaldo illustrates this by contrasting Vermigli’s theology of justification with Cardinal John Henry Newman’s:⁸⁵ On the one hand, there is the belief, which Castaldo (only in part rightly, as we shall see below) associates with Vermigli, that human beings are unable to receive God’s grace because of their fallen nature. They cannot receive the gift, because their fallenness inescapably corrupts it. Through their very reception of the gift, they defile it. In order to circumvent this problem, God has to bestow his grace in such a way that it remains extrinsic to human beings, at least in its ‘initial’ justifying moment. Castaldo

⁸³ “Reatus enim, et offensa Dei per fidem in Christum in baptismo condonatur, quamvis adhuc materia peccati supersit. Quae quamvis in hominibus sanctis fracta et debilitata sit, tamen perfectam eius expoliationem non nisi in morte consequimur.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 151.)

⁸⁴ “Quisque enim nostrum in se ipso experitur naturae corruptionem esse residuam: quum adhuc quoque in peccata perpetuo ruamus. Ad reas autem divinas corpore animoque inepti simus.” (Ibid.)

⁸⁵ Castaldo, “The Grammar of Justification.” I am aware that this PhD thesis has been published in 2017 as *Justified in Christ*, but I have not had the chance to access a copy of this monograph.

shows that Newman's approach exemplifies a systematic alternative to this outlook.⁸⁶ It consists – in short – in holding that the gift of grace *is God himself* in Christ. This gift of Christ to the believer is purely gratuitous, and usually given in baptism. Christ transforms whoever receives him 'from the inside.' This gift, moreover, can be received in its integrity precisely because it is a real presence of the Divine in the human being, a *shekinah*. The presence of Christ cannot be corrupted by the fallen nature of human beings.

Against the background of these alternatives, we can now describe the aporia in Vermigli's understanding of the workings of grace more precisely: it lies in the fact that Vermigli *both* affirms that fallen human beings can receive God's gift of grace, which is intrinsically transforming, *and* that their nature has the power to corrupt the integrity of this gift. That he affirms the former is evident from his teaching about the mystical union with Christ, which essentially amounts to affirming that the change effected by grace in human beings is intrinsically transforming: when "Christ is made ours and we his,"⁸⁷ this hardly happens merely forensically, or extrinsically. That Vermigli affirms the latter is particularly clear in the Romans *scholium*, where he writes that – unless it is given extrinsically – God's gift of grace is defiled by human fallenness: the "righteousness and renewal by which we are created anew by God" is "imperfect because of our corruption."⁸⁸ Therefore, at its clearest, the aporia means that if human beings are so depraved that they can only be saved by extrinsic grace, how can this initially extrinsic grace really change them, if it is not really transformative from the outset? In other words, in a 'purely' forensic view of the gift of grace, there is always the problem of how this gift transforms and sanctifies human beings. Because if human beings have the power to resist God's transformative grace, does this not imply that God's grace is not really transformative?

It might be objected that it is not fair to compare two different discourses – Vermigli's programmatic and polemical *scholia* about justification and his letters to friends about union with Christ – and detect a tension between them. Could the differences not be explained by the respective contexts? It is indeed fair to say that the genre and context

⁸⁶ See on this and the following *ibid.*, 141–54.

⁸⁷ "Christus ... efficitur noster et nos illius." (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1095.)

⁸⁸ "Idcirco autem dicimus, in ea iustitia et instauratione qua reformamur a Deo non posse esse iustificationem quod ea nostro vitio imperfecta sit, neque possimus cum ea ad tribunal Christi consistere." (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 548.)

of the two discourses is very different. Anyone is likely to articulate his or her thoughts differently when teaching in a context where this teaching is likely going to be met with hostility, or at least stir controversy (as was the case for Vermigli in Oxford), on the one hand, or when writing personal letters to companions whom they know will agree with them, on the other hand. Nevertheless, there is good reason to combine the two discourses. First, both touch on how God bestows his grace on human beings, and are therefore conceptually related. But what is more, the argument for the aporia I have been describing could be made even if the two letters on the union with Christ were left aside. It could be made on the basis of the Romans *scholium* and its various understandings of justification only, if it is granted that Vermigli's focus on Rom II rather than Rom I is motivated by didactic or rhetorical reasons rather than a fundamental objection, as I have argued.

As observed in section one above, there is a tension in the Romans *scholium* between Vermigli's endorsement of the possibility of a 'real' justification which intrinsically changes its beneficiaries, on the one hand, and his teaching that God's gift of justification cannot really be received by human beings due to their fallenness, on the other hand. This tension is a manifestation of the same aporia that we have described through the integration of his teachings on justification and on union with Christ. Again, the crux lies in the issue whether and how God's gift of grace can be received by human beings.

Moreover, and more importantly, the same aporia manifests itself in the Romans *scholium* with regard to the way Vermigli describes the nature of the gift of faith in its relation to the gift of righteousness in justification. We have seen above how faith, for Vermigli, is the capacity to grasp God's promises and his righteousness: through faith "we take hold of the promises of God and the righteousness and merits of Christ and apply them to ourselves."⁸⁹ The importance of such an apprehension is in direct proportion to Vermigli's emphasis that God's own righteousness, which is not communicated to human beings, is the sole formal cause of justification. The more Vermigli emphasises that God's own righteousness is not communicated to human beings, the greater the significance of

⁸⁹ "[P]romissiones Dei et Christi iustitiam meritaque per ipsam apprehendimus et nobis applicamus." Ibid., 521; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 96.)

a human capacity to grasp God's righteousness. There has to be some bridge or medium between God's righteousness and the individual believer, or else the former is meaningless. Faith is supposed to be this medium, yet its origin is not entirely obvious, as we shall see.

The question is, is faith given by God, or is it something human in origin? Vermigli holds that an unregenerate person is incapable of having true faith and that the Holy Spirit must first restore the fallen nature of human beings before they can have faith.⁹⁰ This process has been termed "regeneration." Accordingly, contemporary commentators have held that in the Romans *scholium*, "regeneration logically precedes forensic justification."⁹¹ In this view, it is the Holy Spirit who first enables human beings through regeneration to have faith in God. Once they have faith, however, they are justified by this faith. According to Vermigli, the origin of faith is therefore God, through the Holy Spirit.

Again we may ask: in what way does the Holy Spirit give faith to human beings? Does he give it in such a way that they are intrinsically changed? Or is it another extrinsic gift? We have seen that the initial premise of Vermigli's refutation of the doctrine of the Council of Trent was that nothing in human beings can cause or assist in their justification: their works are corrupted through their fallenness, and God's righteousness cannot be communicated to them without being defiled as well. Therefore, what God recognizes when justifying human beings is not intrinsic but extrinsic to them, namely, Christ's righteousness. Individuals can apply this righteousness to themselves through faith. If this faith is given to human beings, is it given to them in the same way as righteousness, namely extrinsically? If the initial premise – that nothing *in* human beings can cause their justification – still applies, then it would have to be extrinsic, since faith causes

⁹⁰ "The faith by which we embrace Christ comes from the Spirit of God, through whom our inward man is made strong." And again: "So there is no doubt that faith is engendered in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. ... he suddenly pours faith into the elect, yet insofar as he is the cause of faith he is, therefore, before it both in dignity and order." / "[F]idem eam, qua Christum amplectimur, proficisci a spiritu Dei, quo interior noster homo confirmatur. ... Quare dubitandum non est, fidem pectoribus nostris ingenerati per spiritum sanctum. ... In electis fidem repente inserat, tamen quoniam causa est fidei prior est illa et dignitate et ordine." (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 562; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 190–91.)

⁹¹ James, "De Justificatione: The Evolution of Peter Martyr Vermigli's Doctrine of Justification," 331. See also J. V. Fesko, who claims that in the Romans *scholium* "regeneration ... logically precedes justification," because "Vermigli argues that justification and forgiveness of sins can in no way be attributed to anything in the believer." (Fesko, *Beyond Calvin: Union with Christ and Justification in Early Modern Reformed Theology (1517–1700)*, 199.)

justification. Faith would have to be given to human beings in such a way that it remains external to them. But if this were the case, how could human beings apprehend the faith that allows them to apprehend the promise of their justification in Christ? This could potentially lead to an infinite regress, since each gift, insofar as it would have to remain extrinsic, could not be apprehended unless it were enabled by another, yet earlier gift.

Vermigli avoids such an infinite regress, and this indicates that he believes that the gift of faith is one that intrinsically transforms human beings. This means that when it comes to the gift of faith, he does not retain the premise that God's gift has to remain extrinsic to its receiver in order for it to retain its integrity. When God pours faith into the elect, this faith is communicated to them in an intrinsic way, such that the Holy Spirit "changes and makes a new heart and mind."⁹² For a human heart will "perpetually resist" God's gifts, unless it "has been renewed by the Spirit and the grace of God" and is "inwardly changed."⁹³ At this point, therefore, Vermigli not only allows for a gift of God's grace to work intrinsically; his theology actively demands such an intrinsic working of grace, as nothing else has the power to enable faith in fallen human beings.

Consequently, even though Vermigli asserts that the formal cause of justification must be extrinsic to human beings, he maintains that the formal cause of faith is intrinsic to them. Indeed, he asserts that faith is a gift that intrinsically changes human beings, and it is through this assertion that he avoids the infinite regress I mentioned. In the case of the gift of faith, Vermigli therefore changes the premise that human nature has the power to corrupt the integrity of a Divine gift – a premise that he maintains with regard to the gift of righteousness in justification. In the case of faith, he affirms that God's gift *can* be received by human beings, inhere in them, and intrinsically change them. It is not evident that he *should* conceive the gift of faith so differently from the gift of righteousness, especially since he asserts that justification is by faith and that therefore the two gifts are most intimately related. Indeed, the fact that he makes this distinction in the way they are received is a manifestation of the aporia we have encountered above. For in doing so, Vermigli both affirms that fallen human beings can receive a Divine gift such that it

⁹² "[A]b afflatu spiritus sancti profectum qui cor atque animum immutet et refingat." (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 563; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 193.)

⁹³ "Sed animus humanus nisi innovetur spiritu et gratia Dei ... nisi penitus immutetur, ea perpetuo respuet." (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 547; Vermigli, *Predestination and Justification*, 157.)

intrinsically transforms them, while also holding that their nature is such that it would corrupt the integrity of the gift unless it is given to them only extrinsically.

We can conclude, therefore, that the aporia we first observed when combining Vermigli's teaching on justification with his views on the union with Christ is present even in the polemical context of the Romans *scholium* alone. Even here, Vermigli retains an element which cannot be subsumed under a forensic understanding of God's gift, especially through his understanding of the nature of faith. Therefore, the aporia I have been describing merely manifests itself more clearly through combining Vermigli's teaching on justification with his doctrine of the union with Christ, but the argument for it is not dependent on this combination.

4) The Implied Metaphysics of the Workings of Grace and Gift in Vermigli

We have shown that there is an aporia inherent in Vermigli's theology of the workings of grace. What does this mean, especially in terms of the nature of the metaphysical framework underlying Vermigli's thought? As we will see in this section, the aporia indicates that this framework is not uniform. More specifically, the disjunction of the two elements that form the aporia is caused by the fact that each of them is sustained by a different metaphysical understanding of how God's being and the being of the world relate.

The first of the two conflicting assertions that led to the aporia comes down to the fact that human beings can be intrinsically transformed by a divine gift. This assertion demands a metaphysical framework in which it is possible to conceptualise that God works within human beings. Moreover, God's work in human beings must not obliterate their own 'work'; their faith is *theirs* as a gift, after all, even though it is inspired in them by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, a metaphysical framework sustaining this must allow for a non-competitive relationship of divine and human agencies. This is only possible, however, where there is a qualitative difference between the way God acts, and the way in which human beings act. And this in turn is only possible where God's being is thought to be qualitatively different from the way human beings *are*. For if they acted or existed in the same way or on the same 'plane', they would necessarily be in a sort of tug-of-war: more Divine action would mean less human action; more of God's gift would mean less of

the human receiver. This, however, is explicitly not the case with faith for Vermigli. Quite to the contrary, the more God inspires faith in human beings, the more fully they become themselves in communion with Christ.

This element of Vermigli's theology of grace therefore presupposes different qualities of being of God and of creation. Because only in such a metaphysical framework does it make sense for God to work intrinsically in human beings – as is presupposed in the secret or mystical union with Christ. The intrinsic working of God's grace might not presuppose a fully developed metaphysics of participation, yet it could not be envisaged without some form of metaphysical participation. Because only if God is pre-eminently, giving being to the world, can he give gifts in such a way that they touch the very being of the receiver. Put differently: if God sustains the being of all things at any point anyway, his gift of grace can fundamentally transform those who receive it. One form this gift takes is faith. We have seen how Vermigli conceives of faith as something which is given in such a way that it changes the way human beings *are*, not just extrinsically, but also intrinsically. This kind of gift-giving is in continuity with the way God gives being in a participatory framework, as in such a framework, all God's gifts are in continuity with each other.

This contrasts with the metaphysics implied in the second of the two conflicting assertions that lead to the aporia that I have described above. This assertion amounts to the notion that God's gift to human beings can only be a 'pure' gift, if it is given in an extrinsic way. This understanding of gift, as we have seen, is present in the way Vermigli envisages the gift of righteousness to be given in justification. Here, the Divine gift is not initially thought to transform human beings from the inside. Rather, what is initially transformed is only God's judgement of them. Put differently: God's first gift to human beings is that they are counted just. This means, however, that God initially acts in himself, not in human beings. Only once this pure first gift is given, will human beings themselves be transformed. Behind this assertion is the understanding that if God acted in human beings and gave them something that was 'theirs', which then somehow contributed to his acceptance of them, this would take away something from his purely gratuitous act. Indeed, Vermigli rules out every human involvement in this first moment of justification, as this would constitute the dangerous seed of Pelagianism for him. Human beings might be led to believe – wrongly – that they can contribute something to their salvation. This is

the reason why the gift of righteousness must be given to human beings first and foremost in such a way that does not affect their own being. Such a gift is necessarily non-ontological. It is given to human beings in the same way that a new dress might be given to them, and not in such a way that it makes them new from the inside out.

This kind of Divine gift-giving, however, is indicative of a metaphysical framework in which the relationship between God and the world is not characterised by different qualities of being. If the “unregenerate” have the power to resist and spoil God’s gift, then this suggests that God’s work in the world is fundamentally two-tiered, and defined by a general influence which sustains the world, and a special influence which overcomes this resistance. As we have seen in chapter one, however, this model of causality points to a univocal metaphysical framework. Moreover, the idea that something human could take away from God’s gratuitous act, which is part of Vermigli’s rationale for envisaging the gift of righteousness in the way he does, is typical of a univocal metaphysics. After all, only when God and human beings are envisaged on the same ontological level, can their mutual agencies ever be in competition with each other.

Another instance where the aporia which I have been describing manifests itself lies in the importance Vermigli assigns to a temporal sequence in his theology of grace. On the one hand, when he discusses justification in polemical contexts, he insists that the workings of grace are determined by a temporal sequence. As we have seen, there is one ‘phase’ that gives way to another in a necessarily temporal sequence: only *after* justification can there be an intrinsic transformation of the believer. On the other hand, this temporal determination of the workings of grace is less central in the way Vermigli characterises the relationship between the mystical and spiritual union with Christ. As we have seen above, Vermigli makes clear that the former has priority over the latter, but he is hesitant to determine this priority as temporal. The fact that Vermigli insists on a temporal sequence in the way he envisages God’s gift of grace to be given in one context and deprioritises it in another, again indicates a tension in his notion of gift. It moreover indicates that this tension goes all the way down to the level of the metaphysical framework it inhabits, because it is difficult to envisage a strict temporal sequence of one Divine gift being given after another in a framework of metaphysical participation. This is because such a metaphysical framework proceeds from the conviction that nothing would have its being unless it participated in God. There can therefore be no ‘first’ moment in

which God is 'outside' the world, or in which human beings are entirely untouched by him in such a metaphysics. On the other hand, if the relationship between God and the world is not seen as determined by such a fundamentally ontological dependence, then it becomes possible to distinguish between 'before' and 'after' God's gift. Therefore, Vermigli's ambivalence about whether or not it is important to envisage the process of salvation in a temporal sequence confirms the thesis that his theology simultaneously inhabits two different metaphysical frameworks.

In sum, we have seen that the workings of God's gift of grace in Vermigli's theology are aporetic. This aporia moreover indicates that Vermigli does not have a uniform understanding of how God's being and the being of the world relate. Instead, his understanding of God's gift of grace simultaneously displays the marks of a participatory metaphysics and of a univocal metaphysics sustaining it. As we shall see in the next chapter, a similar plurality emerges from studying the underlying metaphysics of Vermigli's theology of the Eucharist.

Chapter Three: The Eucharist and the Workings of Divine Presence

Peter Martyr Vermigli invested most of his academic energy in the question of the Eucharist, as he was prominently involved in the notoriously polemical Eucharistic controversies of the sixteenth century. Not only did he debate with exponents of the Catholic view, both in person and in writing, but he was also engaged in controversy with certain Lutheran views and writers, and increasingly so over the course of his life. His extensive familiarity with the work of the Church Fathers meant that among his friends and allies, he acquired the reputation of being the definitive expert on the Eucharist.¹ He was especially known for mastering the art of defending the Reformed stance by means of appealing to the Church Fathers. Calvin famously praised Vermigli's skill in this regard, writing that the task of demonstrating that the Early Church did not believe in transubstantiation was "crowned by Peter Martyr who has left nothing more to be done."² Vermigli's reputation as a learned champion of the Reformed view on the Eucharist with a comprehensive knowledge of the tradition of the Church was, moreover, manifest at the Colloquy of Poissy (1561), which was arguably one of the last historical moments when the divide between Catholics and Protestants could have still been brought to an end. At this colloquy, Vermigli was effectively the leader of the Protestant party, exercising his authority to turn down a compromise formula on the Eucharist that Cardinal Lorraine had proposed, even though some of the Protestants would have been willing to accept it.³

There is no need to present Vermigli's view on the Eucharist extensively in this chapter, since this task has been performed excellently and comprehensively by Salvatore Corda in his *Veritas Sacramenti*. The first section will give a brief overview of Vermigli's contributions to the Eucharistic controversies, as well as of the extant secondary literature. It is worth noting that in the Eucharistic controversies, we find Vermigli at his

¹ For instance, in August 1561, Theodore Beza wrote to John Calvin expressing his desire for Vermigli's participation in the forthcoming Colloquy of Poissy, stating that Martyr had the mastery of patristic literature that the Protestant cause needed. Cf. Théodore de Bèze, *Correspondance de Théodore de Bèze. Tome 3, (1559-1561)*, ed. Hippolyte Aubert, Henri Meylan, and Alain Dufour (Genève: Droz, 1963), 143.

² "Cumulum addidit Petrus Martyr, ut nihil prorsus desiderari queat." Jean Calvin, *Ioannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, ed. Edouard Cunitz, Johann-Wilhelm Baum, and Eduard Reuss, vol. 9 (Brunswick: Schwetschke, 1870), 490.

³ Donald Nugent, *Ecumenism in the Age of the Reformation: The Colloquy of Poissy* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1974), 145–46.

most polemical. In accordance with the overall aim of this study, the remainder of this chapter will then focus on the ‘cracks’ in the picture of Vermigli’s Eucharistic thinking. I will argue that these cracks point to a complex metaphysics sustaining this picture.

As I will argue, there is an unspoken but crucial presupposition in Vermigli’s Eucharistic theology concerning the relationship between God and the world, namely that it is conceived of in terms of spatial *distance*, rather than by means of different quality of their being. As we shall see, this means that Vermigli’s standard understanding of presence is related to spatial nearness, or indeed denotes the enclosure of one thing in another. Simultaneously, however, it is the main thrust of his arguments against transubstantiation to deny the need for this very spatial presence. As I will show, this leads to the paradox that Vermigli, in the very attempt to overcome the spatial distance between God and the world that he tacitly presupposes, cements this very distance. In what follows, I shall gradually develop this thesis and its implications for Vermigli’s implied metaphysics, before considering George Hunsinger’s use of Vermigli as a source in *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*.⁴ To begin with, a brief review of the sources and available secondary literature is in order.

1) Situating Sources and Secondary Literature

Peter Martyr Vermigli’s main works contributing to the Eucharistic controversies are the following. First, there are the minutes of the so-called *Oxford Disputation* on the Eucharist (1549), in which he, the newly appointed Regius Professor, disputed with three Oxford dons who opposed the his views on the Eucharist: William Tresham (1495-1569), a fellow of Christ Church, William Chedsey (1510-1574), a fellow of Corpus Christi College, and Morgan Phillips (died 1570) of St. Mary’s Hall.⁵ Richard Cox, the chancellor of the university, declared Peter Martyr as the winner of this four-day disputation. Usually the

⁴ George Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism: Let Us Keep the Feast* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁵ Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Tractatio de sacramento Eucharistiæ, habita in celeberrima Universitate Oxoniensi. Ad hec Disputatio de eadem Universitate habita M.D. XLIX* (London: [R. Wolfe], 1549). The pagination restarts with the disputatio, which is why I will refer to only either the *Tractatio* or the *Disputatio* in what follows, even though they are found in the same volume. An English translation of both, together with a helpful introduction by Joseph McLelland is available through the Peter Martyr Library: Peter Martyr Vermigli, *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist, 1549*, trans. Joseph C. McLelland, The Peter Martyr Library 7 (Kirkville MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 2000).

minutes of the *Oxford Disputation* are published together with the so-called *Oxford Treatise*, in which Vermigli expounds the stance he took in the disputation in a more systematic manner. Secondly, Vermigli wrote the “longest monograph on the sacrament of the entire Reformation,”⁶ the 1559 *Defensio* against Stephen Gardiner with a total of 821 folio pages.⁷ It had been one of Thomas Cranmer’s last wishes for Vermigli to issue a rebuttal of Gardiner’s apology of transubstantiation, which the latter had published attacking Cranmer’s doctrine of the Eucharist.⁸ Vermigli’s third published work which is exclusively engaged in Eucharistic controversies is his *Dialogue on the Two Natures of Christ*.⁹ This is both his last publication and his first open polemic against a fellow Protestant, namely the Lutheran Johannes Brenz. This work takes the form of a virtual dialogue between Orothetes (Vermigli) and Pantachus (Brenz) and the issue at stake is the ubiquity of Christ – a topic that became notorious through the Lutheran doctrine of the Eucharist. Other than these three works, Vermigli wrote on the Eucharist in his commentary on the first letter to the Corinthians, as well as in many smaller writings and letters.¹⁰ In what follows, I will primarily draw on Vermigli’s three main books on the issue.

Given the prominence of the Eucharistic controversies in Vermigli’s *oeuvre*, it does not come as a surprise that a relatively large proportion of the small field of modern-day Vermigli scholarship is devoted to the Eucharist. Apart from a few shorter contributions,¹¹

⁶ Joseph C. McLelland, “Translator’s Introduction,” in *The Oxford Treatise and Disputation on the Eucharist, 1549*, The Peter Martyr Library 7 (Kirkville MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 2000), xxxv.

⁷ Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Defensio Doctrinae Veteris et Apostolicae de Sacrosancto Eucharistiae Sacramento ... Adversus Stephani Gardineri ... Librum* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1559). This work has been neither edited nor translated.

⁸ For an overview of the bibliography of the Cranmer-Gardiner-Vermigli dispute, see McLelland, “Translator’s Introduction,” xxxiv–xxxvi.

⁹ Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Dialogus de Utraque in Christo Natura* (Zurich: C. Froschauer, 1561). John Patrick Donnelly’s translation, together with a helpful introduction, has been published as part of the Peter Martyr Library: Peter Martyr Vermigli, *Dialogue on the Two Natures in Christ*, trans. John Patrick Donnelly, The Peter Martyr Library 2 (Kirkville MO: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1995).

¹⁰ For a comprehensive overview of the sources see Salvatore Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti: A Study in Vermigli’s Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper* (Zürich: TVZ, 1975), part I.

¹¹ Peter Opitz, “Eucharistic Theology,” in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank A. James (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 387–400; J. Andreas Löwe, “The Bodie and Bloud of Christ Is Not Carnallie and Corporallie in the Bread and Wine: The Oxford Disputation Revisited,” in *Die Zürcher Reformation: Ausstrahlungen Und Rückwirkungen*, ed. Alfred Schindler and Hans Strickelberger (Bern: Peter Lang, 2001), 317–26; Nick Needham, “Peter Martyr and the Eucharistic Controversy,” *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 17 (1999): 5–25; David C. Steinmetz, “Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562): The Eucharistic Sacrifice,” in *Reformers in the Wings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 151–61; Benjamin F. Paist, “Peter Martyr and the Colloquy of Poissy,” *Princeton Theological Review*, no. 20 (1922): 212-231-447-646.

no fewer than four full monographs have been published on Vermigli's sacramental and especially Eucharistic theology: Joseph McLelland's pioneering *The Visible Words of God* in 1957,¹² Salvatore Corda's *Veritas Sacramenti* in 1975,¹³ and more recently Jason Zuidema's *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the Outward Instruments of Divine Grace*¹⁴ and Jin Heung Kim's *Scripturae et Patrum Testimoniis*.¹⁵

McLelland's and Corda's works are of lasting importance. They complement each other, since McLelland focusses on the systematic contours of Vermigli's sacramental theology and on how it relates to the reformer's entire work, whereas Corda's emphasis is on Vermigli's theology of Eucharist exclusively. Corda carefully presents and studies everything Vermigli has ever written on this topic, including sources that are rarely examined, such as the *Defensio* against Stephen Gardiner. In what follows, I will repeatedly draw on his fine study.

Zuidema's and Kim's books, however, are less helpful and for different reasons quite flawed. Zuidema's *Outward Instruments*, on the one hand, could serve as a handy introduction to the main themes in Vermigli's theology, yet it neither presents the reader with source material that has not been studied before, nor does it present a thesis that deserves its name. The book's main thesis is that Vermigli was "one which seeks to steer the middle road between an over-carnalization and an over-spiritualization."¹⁶ Apart from it being doubtful whether the terms "carnalization" and "spiritualization" are useful categories at all, it is also far from clear by what standard Zuidema judges something to be "overly" carnal or spiritual. Indeed, the description of the middle position is best understood as Vermigli's declaration of intent in his Eucharistic theology. When seen as such, however, it is likely to apply to every theologian working within the Reformed tradition, as Luca Baschera has pointed out.¹⁷

Kim's project, on the other hand, is fraught with fundamental methodological difficulties. He compares the way in which Vermigli and his opponents use the Church

¹² McLelland, *The Visible Words of God*.

¹³ Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*.

¹⁴ Jason Zuidema, *Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562) and the Outward Instruments of Divine Grace* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008).

¹⁵ Jin Heung Kim, *Scripturae et Patrum Testimoniis: The Function of the Church Fathers and the Medievals in Peter Martyr Vermigli's Two Eucharistic Treatises* (Apeldoorn: Instituut voor Reformatieonderzoek, 2009).

¹⁶ Zuidema, *Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562) and the Outward Instruments of Divine Grace*, 10.

¹⁷ Luca Baschera, "Review: Jason Zuidema, *Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499–1562) and the Outward Instruments of Divine Grace*," *Zwingliana* 36 (2009): 174–75.

Fathers as part of their argumentation in their Eucharistic debates. His aim is thereby to find “a useful way to evaluate the validity of their doctrines of the Lord’s Supper.”¹⁸ He thus tries to determine who is more ‘orthodox’ in the *Dialogus* – the Lutheran theologian Johannes Brenz or Vermigli – by judging how “correctly” and “rightfully”¹⁹ they employ citations of the Fathers as part of their argument (Vermigli emerges as the winner of this contest).²⁰ This procedure is of course deeply problematic, for it is far from clear how one determines the “correct” interpretation of the Church Fathers, let alone why any such interpretation should be the measure for orthodoxy. In a tradition without a magisterium, there is no-one to determine any one “correct” interpretation of the Fathers, and an academic approach cannot, by definition, tacitly assume the place of a magisterium. In what follows, we will therefore neither draw on nor further engage with Zuidema’s or Kim’s books.²¹

2) Meant to be Merely a Matter of Method

In the words of a recent commentator, Vermigli has an “obsession with refuting transubstantiation.”²² Arguing against transubstantiation is indeed Vermigli’s key concern in all of his Eucharistic writings, with the exception of the *Dialogus*. In this section, I will demonstrate that the rejection of transubstantiation is Vermigli’s foremost concern in Eucharistic writings and explain what this does and does not mean. As we shall see, Vermigli’s attacks on transubstantiation were intended to be first and foremost an argument about theological method.

That Vermigli’s Eucharistic writings revolve around transubstantiation can be seen, for instance, in the first of the three propositions of the Oxford disputation: “There is no

¹⁸ Kim, *Scripturae et Patrum Testimoniis*, 285.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 286.

²⁰ In Kim’s own words: “The validity of Peter Martyr’s use of the Fathers against that of Brenz ... is also significant for the orthodoxy of the Reformed doctrine of the Lord’s Supper. ... Peter Martyr’s ... validity in the use of the Fathers for the support of his doctrines ought to be regarded as the orthodoxy of the Reformed camp in this matter [sic].” (*Ibid.*, 321.)

²¹ Another contribution, which does not deserve closer attention because it is replete with untenable generalisations, is Donald Fuller, “Sacrifice and Sacrament: Another Eucharistic Contribution from Peter Martyr Vermigli,” in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations*, ed. Frank A. James (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 215–37. Fuller writes for instance that “Vermigli’s difficulty with real ‘flesh’ in the Eucharistic elements is not only due to the un-intelligibility of that notion but also is a function of his concern for the biblical view of personhood. Vermigli’s idea of man is derived more from the Hebrew idea of wholeness than from the abstract theological anthropology of the platonici.” (227).

²² McLelland, “Translator’s Introduction,” xxxiii.

transubstantiation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament of the Eucharist.”²³ Effectively, the whole debate centres on this proposition, for despite their agreement to turn to the second proposition at the end of the third day, the disputants went back to discussing transubstantiation on the fourth and final day. This is not surprising given that the second proposition (“The body and blood of Christ are not in the bread and wine carnally and corporeally, nor as others say, under the species of bread and wine”)²⁴ is effectively a general expression of what is said more specifically in the first proposition, meaning that its discussion will almost necessarily redound upon the precise disagreement named in the first proposition. Robert Persons (1546-1610), a Jesuit priest, observed this in 1604, claiming that the order in which these two propositions were discussed made a real discussion about the matter impossible.²⁵ The third proposition (“The body and blood of Christ are united with the bread and wine sacramentally”)²⁶ was omitted altogether at the request of William Tresham, who was one of the three people debating with Vermigli. This is unfortunate, given that this was the only constructive rather than negatively polemical proposition.²⁷

Given this sequence of discussions in the disputation, it is unsurprising that the *Oxford Treatise* – Vermigli’s formal explication of the disputation – is equally focused upon transubstantiation. No fewer than five sixths of it are devoted to arguing against “that union through which, as they generally state, the bread and wine are transubstantiated into the body and blood of Christ.”²⁸ In essence, the treatise is an examination of all arguments Vermigli is aware of, both in favour of and against transubstantiation. He

²³ “In sacramento Eucharistiae non est panis et vini transubstantiatio in corpus et sanguinem Christi.” (Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Disputatio de de sacramento Eucharistiae* (London: [R. Wolfe], 1549), 1v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 133.)

²⁴ “Corpus et sanguis Christi non est carnaliter aut corporaliter in pane et vino, nec ut alii dicunt, sub speciebus panis et vini.” (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 1v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 133.)

²⁵ “This manifest fraud was used, that whereas the first [proposition] about transubstantiation, dependeth of the second of the reall presence, it should have byn handled in the second place, and not in the first ... it is, as if the question being, first whether gold were in a purse, and then whether yt were there alone or els togeather with led, tynne, or some such baser mettall.” (Robert Parsons, *A Review of Ten Publike Dispuvations or Conferences Held within the Compasse of Foure Yeares, under K. Edward & Qu. Mary, Concerning Some Principall Points in Religion, Especially of the Sacrament & Sacrifice of the Altar ...* ([Saint-Omer]: F. Bellet, 1604), 37.)

²⁶ “Corpus et sanguis Christi uniuntur pani et vino sacramentaliter.” (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 1v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 133.)

²⁷ Cf. McLelland, “Translator’s Introduction,” xxvii.

²⁸ “[D]e ea coniunctione qua panem et vinum dicunt vulgo transubstantiari in corpus et sanguinem Christi.” (Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Tractatio de sacramento Eucharistiae* (London: [R. Wolfe], 1549), 1r; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 22.)

knows of twenty arguments for transubstantiation, and – after enumerating them all – refutes them one by one. He also lists a total of forty-seven arguments against transubstantiation, taken from the Scriptures, Church Fathers and reason.

The *Defensio* against Bishop Gardiner, written almost a decade after the *Oxford Treatise*, is equally essentially an argument against transubstantiation: While its first and longest part is Vermigli's direct reply to no fewer than 255 arguments that Gardiner put forward in his last contribution to the debate with Cranmer,²⁹ either *for* the Catholic doctrine or *against* Cranmer's stance,³⁰ its second, third and fourth parts refer back to the arguments of the *Oxford Treatise* and disputation respectively, defending and elaborating on them.³¹

The bulk of Vermigli's Eucharistic writings is therefore focused on denying transubstantiation. It is notable that what he rejects is only a certain "mode of union of the Lord's body and blood with the symbols of bread and wine."³² This is significant because Vermigli insists that he only disagrees with his Catholic contemporaries about the *mode* of Christ's presence in the Eucharist. It was in no way his intention to promote a Eucharistic theology that would diminish or deny Christ's presence in the sacrament or the union with Christ that the faithful can enjoy through partaking in it. Indeed, it is Vermigli's most fundamental tenet in his debates with Roman Catholics that the theory of transubstantiation is simply not needed in order to claim Christ's presence in the Eucharist. His argument – at least in its intention – is therefore merely a methodological one. This can be seen, first, in the way Vermigli vehemently defends Christ's 'real' presence in the Eucharist, and, secondly, in how he rejects transubstantiation.

²⁹ Stephen Gardiner, *Confutatio cavillationum quibus sacrosanctum ... Eucharistiae Sacramentum ab impiis Capernaitis impeti solet* (Leuven: P. Colonaem, 1552).

³⁰ Vermigli, *Defensio*, 1–594.

³¹ In the case of the second part (Ibid., 595–643.) Vermigli once again discusses the ten hermeneutical "Rules for understanding the Church Fathers" that he had proposed in the *Treatise* (see Vermigli, *Tractatio*, 35v–37v.) – however newly grouping them into twelve rules – and defends them against Gardiner's critique. In the third part (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 644–716.), Vermigli defends the solutions he had offered to Catholic critiques at the Oxford disputation, and which had been subsequently challenged by Gardiner. The same structure is followed in the fourth part, which specifically focuses on the right interpretation of sayings of the Church Fathers (Ibid., 717–821.).

³² "[M]odus coniunctionis corporis et sanguinis domini cum symbolis panis et vini." (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, 1r; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 22.)

Regarding the first point, Vermigli consistently claims that the body which the faithful receive in the Eucharist is Christ's true body.³³ Vermigli consistently agrees with Gardiner and his Oxford disputants that the body and blood of Christ are in the Eucharist. When pressed by William Chedsey on the fourth day of the disputation whether he thought "the body of Christ [was] in the sacrament or not?", Vermigli replied, "I do not deny that in the sacrament the true body of Christ is present sacramentally ... and I affirm with confidence that he is truly offered to us and received."³⁴

The contentious issue for Vermigli does not lie in the *quid* of what is presented through and received in the sacrament of the altar – he agrees that it is Christ's body and blood – but in the *quomodo* of how he is present and received. Vermigli asserts that the difference between himself and his Catholic opponents concerns "the mode of presence" only.³⁵ He repeatedly declares in the *Defensio* against Gardiner that the controversy concerns solely the way in which Christ is present in the Eucharist and is received by the communicants:³⁶ "We do not dispute that the body [of Christ] is given, but the mode in which it is given."³⁷ Or again: "The whole controversy is about the mode in which the body of Christ is accepted."³⁸

There is not the slightest ambiguity in how Vermigli understands the words of institution here; *corpus* for him means Christ's body.³⁹ In order to appreciate Vermigli's reasoning on the mode in which Christ's body is present in the bread, however, it is useful to consider his understanding of what constitutes a sacrament. As Corda has shown, for Vermigli, a sacrament is defined through a particular relationship that is formed between two distinct realities: the Eucharistic elements as they are perceived by the senses, on the one hand, and the invisible and heavenly *res sacramenti* – which is Christ's body and blood

³³ On this and the following, see Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 123–25.

³⁴ "In sacramento, est ne corpus Christi an non? Martyr: Non nego in sacramento verum corpus Christi esse sacramentaliter ... et nobis vere exhiberi, et accipi asseveranter affirmo." (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 89v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 280.)

³⁵ "Differentia est inter nos quo ad modum praesentiae." (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 89v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 280.)

³⁶ Cf. Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 123.

³⁷ "Non de corpore dato contendimus, sed de modo, quo detur." (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 81.)

³⁸ "Omnis controversia est de modo, quo corpus Christi recipiatur." (Ibid., 816.)

³⁹ When interpreting Jesus' words "This is my body", Vermigli states: "The term 'body' in this statement means the true body of Christ." / "Corpus enim in ea propositione verum Christi corpus significat." (Ibid., 80.)

in the case of the Eucharist – on the other hand.⁴⁰ This is what Vermigli means when he says, as we have seen above, that the body of Christ is “present sacramentally” – namely that there is a specific and unique relationship between the body of Christ as he sits at the right hand of God the Father, and the Eucharistic elements. This sacramental relationship is moreover defined through what Vermigli calls “signification.” He believes that the body of Christ is joined with the symbols “through signification”⁴¹ and that the body of Christ is in the symbols “through sacramental signification,” insofar as they “signify, represent, and offer us the body and blood of Christ.”⁴²

Vermigli does not specify the nature of this relationship by signification between the Eucharistic elements and the body of Christ. McLelland argues that Vermigli relates the two by recourse to analogy, yet McLelland seems to misunderstand the concept of analogy and he overstates the case. Insisting that there is an analogical relationship at the heart of Vermigli’s theology of revelation, McLelland holds that Vermigli’s “mode of relating two disparate or disjunctive terms is neither simple univocity nor pure equivocity, nor yet analogy or a determinate (arithmetical) relationship, but analogy as likeness of proportion.”⁴³ This distinction is odd, for it seems to separate two things that really are one and the same. Most commentators would agree that in medieval theories of analogy, the analogy of proportion is precisely characterised by a comparison of two proportions – the most straightforward of which is arithmetical – and that if there was said to be an analogical relationship between God and creatures, then it was an analogy of attribution or participation.⁴⁴ It is therefore even more curious that McLelland seems to believe that a “relationship of proportionality” is the way Thomas Aquinas understands the analogy of being between God and creatures, and on this basis he asserts that there is a “striking similarity” between Vermigli’s and Thomas Aquinas’s thought.⁴⁵ McLelland’s text and

⁴⁰ Cf. e.g. “The sacrament is the relation between the external symbols which we seize upon with our eyes and senses, at the things signified, which are eternal, heavenly and invisible.” / “Sacramentum autem est quaedam relatio, inter illa, videlicet, externa symbola, quae oculis et sensibus usurpamus, et res significatas, quae sunt aeternae, coelestes et invisibiles.” (Ibid., 534.) Cf. Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 101–4.

⁴¹ “Credimus enim coniungi corpus Christi symbolis per significationem.” (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 73v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 255.)

⁴² “Est per significationem sacramentalem in symbolis quia nobis significant, representant et exhibent corpus et sanguinem Christi.” (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 90v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 282.)

⁴³ McLelland, *The Visible Words of God*, 80.

⁴⁴ Cf. E. Jennifer Ashworth, “Medieval Theories of Analogy,” ed. Edward N. Zalta, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2017.

⁴⁵ McLelland, *The Visible Words of God*, 81.

footnotes convey, however, that his reading of Aquinas is mediated through C. B. Phelan, who reads Aquinas through the lens of Cajetan's *De Nominum Analogia*, and is hence at least twice removed from Aquinas. His subsequent critique of Aquinas should therefore be treated with caution. He writes that Thomas and Roman Catholics since him "fundamentally walk by sight, by their creaturely continuity of being with God."⁴⁶ To speak of a "continuity of being," however, is to assume a univocity of being, rather than an analogical participation in God's pre-eminent being. Most commentators would agree that Thomas Aquinas understood the analogical relationship between God and creation in this sense, and not as an analogy of proportion. However, what about McLelland's claim that Vermigli conceives of the relationship between God and the world through an analogy of proportion? It seems similarly hard to justify this, for McLelland's claim rests on very few references to Vermigli's works, and these are more didactic than programmatic in nature. Nowhere does Vermigli propound an understanding of analogy as the basis of his theology, but he only gives overviews over classically Aristotelian distinctions in its understanding.⁴⁷ Therefore, as Klaus Sturm has intimated, the prominent place that McLelland assigns to analogy in Vermigli's thought is simply not warranted.⁴⁸ We have to conclude, *pace* McLelland, that Vermigli's 'analogical' reasoning is relatively limited, and that it cannot serve as an explanation of how he envisages the sacramental *signum* and the *res significata* to relate.

The precise nature of this relationship, and the precise nature of what Vermigli calls Christ's "sacramental" union with the Eucharistic elements, is something on which he never elaborates. One reason for this, as we have seen, is that proposition three of the Oxford disputation ("The body and blood of Christ are united with the bread and wine sacramentally")⁴⁹ was never discussed. Furthermore, all Vermigli's works on the Eucharist

⁴⁶ Ibid., 83.

⁴⁷ Such as for instance in his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* I,6, where he teaches that there are three forms of analogy, with the first two being forms of *pros hen* predication (referring, in one case, to the shared origin, and in another to a shared goal), and the third an analogy of proportion. (Cf. Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 259–60; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 168.)

⁴⁸ "It seems doubtful that McLelland's expositions on the notion of 'analogy' contribute much to the characterization of Martyr's understanding of revelation in general." Sturm, *Die Theologie Peter Martyr Vermigli*, 143 n. 173 (my own translation).

⁴⁹ "Corpus et sanguis Christi uniuntur pani et vino sacramentaliter." (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 1v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 133.)

beyond the Oxford *Disputation* and *Treatise* are concerned with refuting Catholic or Lutheran doctrines. This means that his thinking is defined by the terms of the polemical debate; he never fully elaborated his own approach. What we know about his own approach is mostly 'negative'; we know for sure primarily what he does *not* mean by the "sacramental" union of Christ with the elements. Neither are the elements mere *aide-mémoires* in an act of remembrance for him, nor does he think they are transubstantiated. That they are more than *aide-mémoires* can be seen from the way in which he criticises Zwinglians in the *Treatise*:

I am not happy that they mention only rarely a sacramental mutation of the bread and wine, although this is no light matter, and one that the Fathers intend ... Scripture does not condemn it, because in his treatment of the sacrament, Paul does not call it simply cup, but cup of the Lord. ... Therefore they have no right to say that this change is a little thing, since it is of great moment.⁵⁰

When Vermigli rejects transubstantiation, he is therefore not motivated by advocating a symbolic understanding of the Eucharist. He does not wish to downplay the importance of the elements. Rather, his rejection of transubstantiation is motivated primarily by a methodological concern. This is evident, as we have seen so far, from his insistence that the body and blood of Christ are present in the Eucharist "sacramentally" and "through signification" – which, even if it is not fully developed as a doctrine, certainly amounts to more than a symbolic understanding of the sacrament.

The second reason why Vermigli's rejection of transubstantiation is, in its intention, essentially about theological method, can be seen from his stated reasons for rejecting the doctrine of transubstantiation. He explicitly holds that the doctrine is simply not necessary. If it is possible to conceive of the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament "sacramentally," as Vermigli himself does, why then introduce a complicated doctrine of transubstantiation? This argument has a functional twist; Vermigli is convinced that believing in transubstantiation is of no additional benefit for

⁵⁰ "[M]ihi id minus placet quod raro mentionem faciunt sacramentalis mutationis panis et vini, quae tamen non levis est, et patres ubique videntur ... Scripturae sanctae illam non contempserunt, etenim Paulus in ipsa agitatione sacramenti non simpliciter nominat poculum, sed poculum domini. ... Quare non est quod dicant mutationem hanc levem esse cum magni sit momenti." (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, 65v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 122.)

either the communicants or the church. In the dedicatory letter to Thomas Cranmer with which he prefaced the Oxford Treatise and Disputation, he writes:

Let them step forward and demonstrate what they have accomplished more than I by their transubstantiations, their marvels and wonders, what more solid fruit and genuine profit they have brought by this sacrament either to communicants or to churches. Will they speak of the benefit of our dwelling in Christ and Christ in us? So will I. Will they speak of obtaining a holy life and heavenly blessedness? I propose that too. Will they speak of receiving the body and blood of Christ? No less do I, yet such as is had by faith and the soul.⁵¹

Similarly, in one of his summarizing statements on the fourth day of the Oxford disputation, Vermigli claimed:

The purpose of eating Christ and receiving this sacrament is that we should live, that we should have everlasting life, that we should not die, that Christ should dwell in us and we in him, as Christ declared in John chapter 6. Yet these benefits and goods may be obtained just as well by admitting a union of the Body of Christ with bread and wine through sacramental signification.⁵²

Not only did Vermigli deem the doctrine of transubstantiation to be unnecessary because it 'does not do' anything beyond his own understanding of the sacrament, but he also invoked a kind of 'Ockham's razor' argument. That is: the doctrine of transubstantiation is too complicated a solution for a problem to which there exist other, and more straightforward approaches. In particular, Vermigli holds that as a doctrine, it too often demands a recourse to God's omnipotence. This, for Vermigli, is a flaw, because "it is a theological doctrine that miracles must not be multiplied without necessity."⁵³ This is a methodological point, and literally the bottom line of Vermigli's argument, as can be seen

⁵¹ "In medium ipsi prodeant et ostendant suis transubstantionibus portens atque τερωτολογιαις quid amplius (quam ego statuerim) solidi fructus et iuste commoditatis [?] ex hoc sacramento vel communicantibus vel ecclesiis attulerint. Commemorabunt manendi in Christo, et ut Christus in nobis maneat, beneficium? Ego quoque illud statuo. Commemorabunt vitae divinae coelestis atque beate consequentem? Ego etiam illam pono. Commemorabunt perceptionem corporis et sanguinis Christi? Ego non minus quam ipsi eam astruo, sed quae fide ac animo habeatur." (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, epistola ad lectorem, sine pagina [p. 8]; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 13.)

⁵² "Finis comedendi Christum atque suscipiendi hoc sacramentum est ut vivamus, habeamus vitam aeternam, non moriamur, Christus maneat in nobis et nos in ipso, quemadmodum testatus est Christus in Ioan. Cap. 6. Caeterum haec beneficia atque commoda tam bene haberi possunt ponendo coniunctionem corporis Christi cum pane et vino per significationem sacramentalem." (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 68r; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 253.)

⁵³ "Potissimum cum sit dogma theologicum non esse multiplicanda miracula absque necessitate." (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 68r; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 252.)

in the last – and therefore most weighty – argument Vermigli gives in a speech on the fourth day of the Oxford disputation:

When holy Scripture proposes something for us to believe universally, it usually requires that when something is to be chosen, we choose for ourselves the mode that is easier and clearer, one that does not call away, but rather leads us by the hand to faith; in this way less serious and fewer absurdities will follow, and miracles will not be multiplied. But you [viz. his Roman Catholic opponents] do not do this, you who have chosen for defence ways where infinite miracles are needed and absurdities pile up without any limits.⁵⁴

As Corda has shown, this same argument can be found repeatedly in the *Defensio*.⁵⁵ In short, Vermigli is convinced that “the Eucharist is a whole and perfect sacrament” quite apart from what he calls the “fancied devices” of the doctrine of transubstantiation.⁵⁶ His ‘obsession’ with refuting transubstantiation is, therefore, in its intention, fundamentally a methodological matter. What Vermigli means to achieve positively is to strengthen the theological basis for Christ’s presence in the Eucharist through ridding it of ostensibly superfluous ballast while retaining the theological rationale for Christ’s union with his faithful in the Eucharist. In his view, his proposed changes to the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist were not major, and he certainly saw himself not as an innovator, but as standing in the orthodox tradition of the Church. In his fictional dialogue with the Lutheran Johannes Brenz, for instance, the whole of Vermigli’s argument amounts to an argument from tradition. He programmatically states: “I will clearly prove my case from the statements of the Fathers.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ “Postremo, quando scriptura sancta nobis aliquid generaliter credendum proponit, convenit ut nos illum modum nobis deligamus (si quis et deligendus) qui sit facilius et expeditior, nec avocet homines sed potius manuducat ad fidem atque ad eum minora paucioraque consequantur absurda, nec miracula multiplicentur. Id autem vos minime praestatis qui modos delegistis ad quos tuendos infinitis opus est miraculis, et absurda concurrunt sine modo.” (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 73v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 255.)

⁵⁵ Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 179 n. 51.

⁵⁶ “Sine his figmentis Eucharistia est integrum perfectumque.” (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, epistola ad lectorem, sine pagina [p. 9]; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 15.) Salvatore Corda confirms our point, writing in the summary of his book, that “in his controversy over the Lord’s Supper [Vermigli] endeavoured to prove that one can come to the same basic results without postulating, as in his view his Catholic and extreme Lutheran opponents did, a physical identification or conjunction between the elements and Christ’s body. With absolute conviction Vermigli constantly maintained that a sacramental understanding of this relationship not only avoids the absurdities of a physical or spatial presence of Christ’s body in the sacrament ... but also does not detract at all from the truth and power of the Lord’s Supper. ‘We do not get less through our spiritual conjunction with Christ’, he repeats, than if we would be given the one supposed by the Papists.” (Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 179. Quoting Vermigli, *Ad Corinthios*, 305v.)

⁵⁷ “Ex Patrum sententiis perspicue demonstrabo.” (Vermigli, *Dialogus*, 4r; Vermigli, *Dialogue*, 15.)

Vermigli's perception of himself as standing within the orthodox Christian tradition, and his understanding of the doctrine of transubstantiation, however, are predicated on a few unspoken presuppositions on his part concerning the nature of Christ's body and its presence in the Eucharist. In the next section, I shall examine these presuppositions in more detail. I will thereby elaborate further how they led Vermigli to believe that transubstantiation was an erroneous approach to framing the sacramental change of the Eucharistic elements.

3) Pivotal but Unspoken Presuppositions

In his prefatory letter to the *Oxford treatise*, Vermigli writes the following: "I totally reject their opinion who contend that the body is enclosed and covered in the bread and wine, and affirm that it is under their forms, so that they should worship and adore him there; in brief, they have set up an idol."⁵⁸ This – together with countless other similar passages – shows how he conceives of the position he rejects. Proponents of transubstantiation, he believes, hold that Christ's historical body flies down from heaven⁵⁹ and is somehow physically enclosed in the transubstantiated Eucharistic host. What is it that led Vermigli to this belief?

THE ARISTOTELIANISM OF VERMIGLI'S BODIES

First, there is his Aristotelian conviction that a body cannot be conceived apart from possessing quantity and locality. This principle applies, for Vermigli, to Christ's body in the Eucharist as well, which means that Vermigli takes it for granted that if Christ is to be in the Eucharist "truly," he must be there in his historical body, including its quantity and locality. This is the reason why Vermigli holds that transubstantiation involves a kind of displacement or multiplication of Christ's historical body, with the latter being at the same time in heaven as well as on numerous altars. He is aware, however, that proponents of transubstantiation hold that in the transubstantiated host, "the body of Christ is there ...

⁵⁸ "Ab illorum vero sententia maxime abhorreo, qui corpus Christi clausam et opertum in pane et vino, vel ut contendunt sub harum rerum speciebus afferunt, idque ut ipsum ibi colant, adorent et in summa idolum erectum habeant." (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, epistola ad lectorem, sine pagina [pp. 10–11]; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 16.)

⁵⁹ Vermigli mockingly holds that if transubstantiation were true, "Christ's body" would have to "fly down and fly away every day" from his place in heaven, "especially before noon." / "Qui fit ut cum cogant quotidie et potissimum usque ad horas meridianas perpetuo devolare et avolare." (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, 16v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 45.)

not in a quantitative manner.”⁶⁰ If they – as is likely – followed the teaching of Thomas Aquinas, then they would have distinguished between the body of Christ in its proper species, on the one hand, and in the species of this sacrament, on the other hand.⁶¹ Vermigli does not accept this answer – and it is not entirely clear why. Instead, he affirms once again the necessarily quantitative and locative nature of bodies:

Here is a wonder, how can they have a body, a quantum, truly present and yet not by way of quantity! Since they affirm his presence truly, corporeally, and carnally, as they say, yet not locally, who cannot see that these arguments are invented to deceive?⁶²

It is indisputable for Vermigli that if the body of Christ is to be present in the Eucharist, then this presence has to be conceived of as a local, quantitative presence of the historical body of Christ – the body, that is, with which Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. Time and again he emphasises this: “You cannot join the body and blood of Christ bodily and substantially to the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper unless you pull them down from heaven because they cannot be in many places simultaneously.”⁶³

It is equally indisputable for Vermigli that accidents – such as quantity and location – can never be taken away from a body. To do so would be against the nature of things. “There are many things which cannot be done,” he says, “because the nature of things does not permit it.”⁶⁴ There are two types of natural laws, he holds, some of which cannot be transgressed without falling into unbearable logical contradictions, whereas others

⁶⁰ “... si ibi sit Corpus Christi, non tamen hoc sit per modum quanti.” (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, 10r; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 37.)

⁶¹ ST III 75,1 ad 2. See also ST III 75,1 ad 3: “Christ’s body is not in this sacrament in the same way as a body is in a place, which by its dimensions is commensurate with the place; but in a special manner which is proper to this sacrament (*speciali modo qui est proprius huic sacramento*). Hence we say that Christ’s body is upon many altars, not as in different places, but sacramentally: and thereby we do not understand that Christ is there only as in a sign, although a sacrament is a kind of sign; but that Christ’s body is here after a fashion proper to this sacrament (*secundum modum proprium huic sacramento*), as stated above.”

⁶² “Hoc est mirandum, quomodo ponant Corpus et quantum et vera ad esse non tamen per modum quanti. Cumque statuant vere adesse et corporaliter et carnaliter ut dicunt sed non localiter. Quis non videat ista conficta esse ad eludenda argumenta?” (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, 10r-v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 37.)

⁶³ “Vos non posse corpus et sanguinem Christi corporaliter et substantialiter pani ac vino coenae dominicae coniungere, nisi e coelo ea detraxeritis, quoniam in pluribus locis simul esse non possunt.” (Vermigli, *Dialogus*, 96v; Vermigli, *Dialogue*, 148.)

⁶⁴ “Multa sunt quae ideo non possunt fieri eo quod rerum natura non patitur.” (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 20v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 164.)

can. Transubstantiation violates a law of nature of the first type,⁶⁵ for it claims to take accidents away from their proper subject.⁶⁶

It is fair to say that Vermigli was more Aristotelian than were his Catholic contemporaries who defended transubstantiation. Vermigli was no isolated case since – as Charles Schmitt has shown – from the mid-sixteenth century until about the mid-seventeenth century, Protestants were generally more Aristotelian than were Catholics.⁶⁷ The only direct reason Vermigli gives for his decision to adhere to the “nature of things” as understood by Aristotle is that he is suspicious of appeals to God’s omnipotence, which seem argumentatively lazy to him. “Why not throw in everywhere the argument drawn from divine power,” he exclaims, “as an invincible argument?”⁶⁸ At one point in the Oxford disputation, he sarcastically declares: “It were an easy thing for anyone to play the theologian, if all arguments could be dissolved by miracles.”⁶⁹ In contrast to this, he himself wishes to maintain that “there are some things that cannot happen even with the divine power, not of course from any failure of it but from the nature of things.”⁷⁰ Rather than basing his argument on God’s power to interrupt the present order, Vermigli appeals to the integrity and necessity of things as they are – and it Aristotle who is his point of reference for defining the “nature of things.”

So far, we have seen that the first presupposition that led Vermigli to a rejection of transubstantiation is his conviction that if Christ’s body were really or substantially present in the Eucharist, as Catholics claim, then it would have to be present in the Eucharistic elements in the same way as any other body is present at any other given place; that is, locally and quantitatively. This presupposition implies that Vermigli does not accept classic defences of the nature of Christ’s presence under the Eucharistic species, as seen for instance in question 75 of the *tertia pars* of Thomas Aquinas’ *Summa*

⁶⁵ Cf. Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 185.

⁶⁶ “They pervert the nature of things, since they take accidents away from their substance and proper subject.” / “Pervertunt rerum naturam cum a substantia et proprio subiecto abstrahunt accidentia.” (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 66v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 251.)

⁶⁷ Charles B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983), 26–27.

⁶⁸ “Cur illud argumentum a divina potentia ductum ubique tanquam invictum inculcatis?” (Vermigli, *Dialogus*, 17v–18r; Vermigli, *Dialogue*, 35.)

⁶⁹ “Verum ita unicuique facile esset agere theologum, si per miracula omnia solvenda essent argumenta.” (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 67v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 252.)

⁷⁰ “Aliqua sint quae fieri non possint (ut ostensum est) vel divina potentia, non quidem ex eius defectu, sed ob rerum ipsarum naturam.” (Vermigli, *Dialogus*, 17v; Vermigli, *Dialogue*, 35.)

Theologiae. In Article 1 of this question (“Whether the body of Christ be in this sacrament in very truth or merely as in a figure or sign”), Aquinas suggests four objections against Christ being in the sacrament “in very truth”, all of which he answers by distinguishing between Christ’s body in its proper species (as he hung on the cross and is sitting on the right hand of the Father), and Christ’s body under the species of the sacrament. Interestingly, the four objections that Aquinas mentions here are echoed almost literally by Vermigli and other reformers.⁷¹ This shows that Vermigli’s critique is anything but novel; and indeed that it had been answered before. More importantly, however, it indicates that a defence of transubstantiation such as that of Aquinas – of which Vermigli had been no doubt aware – had lost its appeal by the sixteenth century. Specifically, it seems that for Vermigli (and some of his contemporaries), it had become difficult to imagine or accept a specific mode of presence of Christ’s body unique to the sacrament. It is important to emphasise that Aquinas would have utterly rejected the kind of “proper” presence of Christ in the elements that Vermigli presupposes transubstantiation to involve. As Anscar Vonier puts it, drawing on ST III q. 76, for Thomas Aquinas,

if the priest at the altar brought down Christ from heaven in his natural state as a full-grown man, this would not be a sacrament in the least, as it would lack the very essence of the sacrament, representative signification. ... At no time do we deal with Christ in the Eucharist in his natural condition, *in propria specie*. It might almost be said that if at any moment Christ in his natural condition were to step into the sacramental *processus*, the sacrament at once would be made meaningless. He must be there *in specie aliena* in order to safeguard the veracity of the sacrament as a sign.⁷²

Vermigli’s Aristotelian conviction about the nature of bodies rules out such a Thomistic distinction between Christ’s body in his natural condition and his body in a condition specific to the sacrament. In particular, his unspoken presupposition that all bodies without exception must possess the accidents of quantity and locality, makes it impossible for Vermigli to conceive of a kind of a presence of Christ’s body “in very truth” in the sacrament that is *not* Christ’s presence *in propria specie*.

⁷¹ Cf. ST III, q. 75, 1, objections: (1) That because the Spirit gives life, the body of Christ is in the sacrament as in a figure, (2) that because the body of the risen Christ is in heaven, it is in the sacrament only as in a sign, (3) that Christ’s true body cannot be on the altar as well as in heaven because no body can be in several places at the same time, (4) and that Christ is in heaven because he said he had to leave in order for the paraclete to come.

⁷² Anscar Vonier, *A Key to the Doctrine of the Eucharist* (s.l.: Assumption Press, 2013), 26–27.

In sum, the first presupposition that led Vermigli to believe that transubstantiation was an erroneous way to conceive of the sacramental change in the elements was his understanding of the nature of bodies in general, and Christ's body in particular. For when applied to the presence of Christ's body in the Eucharist, his understanding of bodies involves positing a local, quantitative presence of the body of Christ in his natural condition on the altar. As we have seen, however, classic proponents of transubstantiation such as Thomas Aquinas would have equally denied such a presence.

THE LOCALITY AND REMOTENESS OF VERMIGLI'S HEAVEN

The second presupposition that caused Vermigli to reject transubstantiation relates to his understanding of heaven as the place where the human nature of Christ dwells. More specifically, and as I shall develop in what follows, he conceives of heaven as spatially determined, on the one hand, and as a place radically separate and distant from earth, on the other hand. This leads Vermigli to conceive of the relationship between Christ and the world as one determined by spatial distance.

Vermigli simply assumes – rather than explicitly acknowledging or even arguing for – the fact that heaven is spatially determined. A striking example for quite how spatially determined Vermigli's thinking on heaven is can be seen in a passage of the *Defensio*. He teaches that God the father “lives in heaven, as the Lord's prayer indicates,” and that Christ sits at the right hand of the father “in his human nature.”⁷³ Because of the presupposition we have already encountered above, namely, that Vermigli cannot conceive of a body without spatial locality, this moreover means that heaven, the place of the human nature of Christ, has to be envisaged as a ‘locality’.⁷⁴ Indeed, heaven is the exclusive place where Christ's human nature dwells; “it cannot be anywhere else than there.”⁷⁵ When pressed by his opponents with the charge that he thereby confined Christ to a particular place, Vermigli retorts that, quite to the contrary, Christ in heaven “is able to walk, to sit, to lie and to move freely through the spaces of heaven.”⁷⁶ This statement is one of the most remarkable expressions of quite how spatially determined Vermigli

⁷³ “Pater in coelis habitat, ut oratio Dominica testatur; ergo filius etiam quoad naturam humanam ibidem habitat. Quandoquidem in coelis est ad dextram patris.” (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 31.)

⁷⁴ “Corpus enim constitui non potest extra locum.” (Ibid., 552.)

⁷⁵ “At cum sit in coelis ... cum salva corporis unitate, in tam diversis locis nequeat.” (Ibid., 31.)

⁷⁶ “Nomo enim nostrum unquam alligavit, aut affixit Christum ad certum aliquem locum. Potest sedere, iacere, ambulare, et quocunque velit per coeli spatia se conferre.” (Ibid., 552.)

envisaged heaven to be. If Christ can walk through the various spaces of heaven, then 'heaven' is a three-dimensionally extended, spacious place, a bit like a stately home.

What is more, heaven can be further characterised as being far away from anything on earth. That this is a presupposition of Vermigli's thinking can be seen only negatively, in that he argues that the distance of places between Christ's body in heaven and the faithful on earth does not prevent their union with Christ. Implicit in assertions like these is a construal of a fundamental distance, a spatial chasm, between heaven and earth. This is significant insofar as the distinction between the two could be conceived of in terms other than distance, such as difference in quality or intensity, which would not define heaven according to earthly measurements.

We find a very clear instance of Vermigli indirectly confirming the distance between heaven and earth in his official written statement to the Colloquy of Poissy.⁷⁷ Indeed, this statement is an expression of Martyr's mature Eucharistic theology in a nutshell. Here he holds that the body and blood of Christ – his human nature – are "really and substantially only in the heavens," where he sits at the right hand of the Father from his ascension until his last coming. However, Vermigli continues, the "distance of places" is no hindrance to

our conjunction with the body and blood of Christ, because the Lord's Supper is a heavenly matter, and although on earth we take bread and wine by the mouth of the body, sacraments of the body and blood of Christ, yet by faith and by the work of the Holy Spirit, our souls, to which this spiritual and heavenly food pertains, are carried up into heaven and enjoy the present body and blood of Christ.⁷⁸

Vermigli therefore asserts that spiritually, the distance between heaven and earth can be overcome, because, in the Eucharist, the souls of the faithful reach up into heaven and are nourished there by Christ's body. Taken together with Vermigli's definition of a sacrament as a relationship between two realities, as seen above, this means that

⁷⁷ This statement can be found in some of the materials that were added to the 1583-edition of the *Loci Communes*: Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1170–71. A translation is available in McLelland, *The Visible Words of God*, 287.

⁷⁸ "Sentio itaque corpus Christi reale atque substantiale tantum in coelis esse. ... Deinde affirmo nostrae coniunctioni cum corpore ac sanguine Christi locorum distantiam non obstare, quoniam Coena Domini res est coelestis, et licet ore corporis accipamus in terris panem et vinum, sacramenta corporis et sanguinis Domini, fide tamen, et ope Spiritus sancti animi nostri quorum in primis est hic spiritualis et divinus cibus ad coelum evecti, praesenti corpore ac sanguine Christi fruuntur." (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1070; McLelland, *The Visible Words of God*, 287.)

believers receive one of these realities – the bread and wine – here on earth, whereas they receive the other reality, Christ’s body and blood, in heaven. Corda comments: “Exactly here faith intervenes. In Vermigli’s view, faith overcomes distances, though not materially, only spiritually. This must be understood in the sense that though the distance objectively remains, subjectively it has been abolished.”⁷⁹ Vermigli stresses time and again that through faith, Christ is seen on the Eucharistic table.⁸⁰ This moreover means that he sees no difference between the way in which believers apprehend Christ in the Eucharist and the way in which the Fathers spiritually consumed the body and blood of Christ in the sacrifices of the old covenant.⁸¹ In both cases, faith makes present “those things which are furthest away from us.”⁸²

What is significant about this conception of the role of faith as an overcomer of distance (literally a *ponti-fex*, as it were), is that it tacitly takes for granted that there is a spatial distance between heaven and earth, which needs to be bridged in some way. McLelland points out that “the spatial terminology used by Martyr, whose stress is on the *sursum corda* ... is not adequate for the reality it seeks to express.”⁸³ It is indeed doubtful whether the spatial determination of the relationship between God and the world, which Vermigli presupposes without questioning, provides a helpful framework for expressing the theological points he cares about most. The reality he seeks to express, as we shall see below, is the union between Christ and the faithful, and his conviction that it is increased through the participation in the Eucharist.

We have so far seen that the second presupposition that led Vermigli to reject transubstantiation relates to his understanding of the place where the risen Christ dwells in his human nature. For Vermigli, this place – “heaven” – is both spatially determined and radically separate and distant from earth. These two characteristics of Vermigli’s heaven

⁷⁹ Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 145–46.

⁸⁰ E.g. “Dicimus autem carnem Christi vi fidei non substantialiter aut realiter, sed tantum spiritualiter nobis fieri praesentem. Quemadmodum enim cum accedimus ad sacram Mensam, per fidem habeam ante oculos, et in conspectu, atque ita praesentem mortem domini: ita per fidem animo, ac spiritu vescimur praesente carne Christi.” (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 725.)

⁸¹ Vermigli is explicit about this in his commentary on I Samuel 1:4, where he writes: “And that was the Holy Communion of those times, since in these victims [of their sacrifices] the holy Fathers ate the body and blood of Christ, as we do today in the bread and wine of the Eucharist.” / “Et ea fuit illorum temporum sacra communio, quandoquidem in illis victimis pii patres corpore ac sanguine Christi vescebantur, ut nos hodie in pane ac vino Eucharistico facimus.” (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 4v.)

⁸² “Nam quae longissime remota sunt a nobis, fides ea facit praesentia.” (Ibid., 5r.).

⁸³ McLelland, *The Visible Words of God*, 165.

are in fact mutually dependent, and it is not entirely clear which of them came first: on the one hand, insofar as he thinks of heaven in quasi-geometrical terms, heaven has to be distinguished from other places by means of its relative distance from them. Put crudely: if heaven is mapped out, then its coordinates have to be different from the coordinates of any place on earth. In such a mapped-out world, there cannot be a mutual inherence of different qualities of places, for instance. On the other hand, one can inversely say that, insofar as Vermigli conceives of heaven and earth as two spatially distant entities, he necessarily conceives of both in spatial terms. Whereas there has been, ever since Descartes, an appeal in thinking of our earthly surroundings in extended spatial terms,⁸⁴ spiritual realities such as “heaven” need not be conceived of in spatial terms at all. The fact that Vermigli thinks of heaven in spatial terms is another crucial but unspoken presupposition of his work.

It is this presupposition about the character of heaven – in which the human nature of Christ is to be found – together with the presupposition about the nature of bodies we have seen above, that makes it impossible for Vermigli to conceive of a ‘physical’ closeness between Christ and believers, or between Christ and the Eucharistic elements, unless Christ is in some way physically brought down from heaven. For Vermigli, there can only be one of two options: *either* there is a physical presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist, but then this body has to be miraculously ‘fly’ down from his place at the right hand of the Father, *or* Christ is not physically or substantially present in the Eucharist at all, but the faithful communicate with him in a different way: spiritually, through faith and the *sursum corda*. It is because he finds the former of these two options absurd and unnecessarily fanciful (as we have seen in the previous section) that Vermigli rejects transubstantiation. There remains, however, the basic reality of this either-or. In the next section, I shall further elaborate on the consequences of this either-or.

Taking a few steps back from Vermigli’s explicit argumentations about the presence of Christ in the sacrament, let us consider what kind of relationship between God and the world is implied by his reasoning. Underlying both presuppositions we have considered so far is the governing assumption that not only the relationship between Christ and the sacramental elements, but more generally the relationship between God

⁸⁴ Cf. Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, 57–74.

and the world, is conceived of in spatial terms. Vermigli envisages the standard relation between the two to be a kind of geographical distance. There is a sense in which this distance has to be overcome first, before there can be an encounter between God and the world. As we shall see in the next section, however, Vermigli paradoxically cements this spatial distance in the very attempt to overcome it.

4) (Not) Overcoming Spatial Distance

In his theology of spiritual communication between Christ and the faithful, Vermigli actively presupposes that their standard relation is determined through a spatial distance that lies between them. At the same time, however, he argues that this distance is of no great importance because it can be overcome spiritually. In this section, I will argue that Vermigli's theology does not in fact overcome this distance, because it in no way challenges the fundamental assumption of a distance between God and the world. In his very argument that the faithful can be united with Christ without there being a "nearness of places" between them, he implicitly cements that the relationship between them is determined spatially. Put differently: Vermigli argues that the spatial distance between God and the world is of no relevance in spiritual matters. He does not, however, critique the idea that there is such a distance in the first place. Quite to the contrary, he takes it so much for granted that he seems to be able to conceive of an intimacy between two entities only through either their spatial overlapping or through bridging the real distance between them spiritually. Presence, in an unqualified sense, straightforwardly means spatial presence for him.

In order to demonstrate quite how Vermigli cements the distance between Christ and the world in the very process of asserting its irrelevance, let us focus on his use of a number of similes, which he repeatedly uses, both in the Oxford treatise (and its dedicatory letter to Cranmer), and in the fictive dialogue with Brenz. The first of these similes is drawn from the body of Christ. Christians are not only united with Christ, but also with their fellow Christians, Vermigli asserts, forming one body of Christ. Based on this he rhetorically addresses his opponents in his letter to Cranmer which prefaces the Oxford treatise:

Will you not agree that the faithful in Spain, Italy, Germany and France are so joined with us as to be (as Paul says) members with us? I know you do

not deny that. Therefore, if separation of places and [lack of] physical contact, which are impossibilities, do not hinder this unity by which we are joined together in one through Christ, why do you deny that we are truly joined to him without any real and corporeal presence? And if you do not deny it, why do you insist on promoting such a presence [in the Eucharist]?⁸⁵

Because neither the lack of physical contact between the faithful in various parts of the world nor their local separation from each other prevents their unity in Christ, the “enormous stretch of distance”⁸⁶ between Christ’s human nature in heaven and the faithful on earth is equally insignificant. Arguing “from the greater to the less by negation,” no local presence of the body of Christ is needed in the elements of the Eucharist, “for the union of Christ with us and those who communicate is greater than with the symbols.”⁸⁷

Vermigli uses marriage as a second simile to make the same point about the needlessness of “physical contact or nearness of places.” Husband and wife are said to be one flesh, he argues. This “union of flesh” persists, however, even “if it sometimes happens that a man stays in London while his wife remains at Cambridge or Oxford.”⁸⁸ Vermigli concludes:

⁸⁵ “Nonne fatebimini eos fideles qui sunt in Hyspania, Italia, Germania, et Gallia nobis coniunctos ita esse, ut sint nobiscum (quemadmodum Paulus dicit) invicem membras? Scio non negabitis. Quod si istam unitatem qua per Christum in unum connectimur, locorum interstitium et contactus physicus (qui nullus esse potest) nihil impediunt, cur absque reali praesentia et corporali, negatis Christo nos vere coniungi? Quod si non negatis, quare istam praesentiam tam importune urgetis?” (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, epistola ad lectorem, sine pagina [pp. 8-9]; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 14.)

⁸⁶ This quote stems from the *Dialogue*, where Vermigli makes the same argument as we have just seen: “Hence if a distance between places does not prevent believers who live in England from being intimately joined to their brothers who dwell in both France and in Germany, what prevents us from being joined to Christ’s human nature ... even though he is far from us by an enormous stretch of distance.” / “Quare, si locorum distantia non obstat quominus fideles qui agunt in Anglia sint cum illis fratribus qui tam in Gallia quam in Germania versantur astrictissime coniuncti, quid impedit quin cum Christi natura humana iungamur ... quamvis a nobis longissimo tractu locorum distet?” (Vermigli, *Dialogue*, 126v–127r; Vermigli, *Dialogue*, 192.)

⁸⁷ “Argumentum nostrum ... est a maiori ad minus per negationem, est enim maior coniunctio Christi ad nos et cum illis qui communicant quam sit cum symbolis.” (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, 44v–45r; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 90.)

⁸⁸ “Quid hic, aut ullo contactu physico aut locorum propinquitate, opus est? ... Et tamen istam carnis unitatem inter coniuges nihil impedit si (ut fit) vir interdum Londini fuerit ad aliquod tempus et uxor Cantabrigiae vel Oxonii manserit.” (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, epistola ad lectorem, sine pagina [pp. 8-9]; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 14.)

Thus in order to enter into union with Christ, there is no need for you to attempt to tie his body and blood ... under the appearance of bread and wine. We are truly joined to Christ without these wonders.⁸⁹

Vermigli re-iterates this argument from the Oxford treatise in the *Dialogue*, which was written more than ten years later: “If a husband is sometimes separated from his wife on a trip, as does happen, he does not cease being one flesh with her.”⁹⁰ By extension, he argues,

nobody will deny that Christ is joined to the Church as well as to each believer by a marriage that is very solid and spiritual. Wherefore a spatial distance, however far, cannot split us from our union with his flesh and blood.⁹¹

The third simile that Vermigli employs to make this same point is that of the sun in its relation to the world. Although the sun “seems to be very far away from us who dwell on earth if one examines spaces and local distances”, it is nonetheless present to everyone living on earth, through its light, its warmth, and its “live-giving influences.”⁹²

The *tertium comparationis* between Vermigli’s Eucharistic theology and all three of the similes he employs – the body of Christ, marriage, and the sun – is that two things are intimately connected without there being a corporeal or physical presence of one in or next to the other. Crucially, therefore, the similes posit a spatial distance between two entities: between a Christian in Germany and another Christian in Spain, between a wife in Cambridge and her husband in London, and between the sun in the firmament and a flower in my garden, for instance. Despite this spatial distance, Vermigli argues, there is a close connection between the two. The main point of the three similes is therefore that

⁸⁹ “Idcirco non est quod unitatis caussa cum Christo ineundae adeo conemini corpus et sanguinem eius, aut pani aut vino alligare vel (ut dicitis) sub speciebus panis et vini operire. Sine his portentis vere Christo adiungimur.” (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, epistola ad lectorem, sine pagina [p. 9]; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 15.)

⁹⁰ “Vir si ab uxore (quemadmodum fit) aliqua peregrinatione interdum abiungatur, non idcirco desinit esse cum illa una caro.” (Vermigli, *Dialogus*, 127r; Vermigli, *Dialogue*, 192.)

⁹¹ “Christum vero ecclesiae nec non cuique fideli iunctum esse spiritali iuxtaque firmissimo coniugio, nemo inficiabitur. Quamobrem nostram unionem cum eius carne ac sanguine distantia locorum quantumvis longinqua, non potest avellere.” (Vermigli, *Dialogus*, 127r; Vermigli, *Dialogue*, 192.)

⁹² “Sol...a nobis videatur abesse qui habitamus terram, si spacia et locorum distantiam spectaveris. Attamen ab omnibus dicitur nobis praesens, quod non solum calorem et lucem, verum etiam dulces, efficaces atque vivificas influentias rebus mortalibus perpetuo ac largissime suppeditet.” (Vermigli, *Dialogus*, 127r; Vermigli, *Dialogue*, 192–93.)

they serve to answer Vermigli's rhetorical question "What need is there either of physical contact or of nearness of places?"⁹³ with a resounding "None!"⁹⁴

Let us recapitulate what we have established so far. We have seen in the previous section how Vermigli envisages the relation between the human nature of Christ and his faithful to be characterised by a radical spatial distance, to the effect that "presence" without further qualification means spatial presence or local nearness for him. This notion of presence causes him to hold that the only way separate entities can be intimately connected to each other is through one of them being delivered into or enclosed in the other. At the same time, however, his rejection of transubstantiation is essentially based on an argument against the need for such a presence, as exemplified in his use of the three similes discussed above.

What we find is that Vermigli sets up, on the one hand, a very place-focussed framework in which the relationship between different entities can be envisaged. They are either physically enclosed one into the other, or separated by a spatial distance. He does not conceive of relationships that are not predicated upon space and place. On the other hand, however, Vermigli battles the very spatial structure he set up himself, in that he argues against the importance of spatial nearness in spiritual matters. That there need not be a physical presence of the human nature of Christ enclosed in the sacramental elements for the faithful to be deeply united to their Lord is in fact one of his main arguments against the doctrine of transubstantiation.

Having seen how unaware Vermigli is in general of his own place- and distance-focussed presuppositions, it seems that Vermigli nevertheless does have a sense for their

⁹³ "Quid hic, aut ullo contactu physico aut locorum propinquitate, opus est?" (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, epistola ad lectorem, sine pagina [pp. 8]; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 14.)

⁹⁴ Even though all three similes share the same *tertium comparationis*, there are nonetheless important differences between them. In the case of the simile of the sun, what overcomes the spatial distance is sense perception. Sense perception is not, however, constant or ontological. By contrast, in the marriage simile, the local separation is only a temporal condition of a stable, indeed arguably ontological, connection. In contrast to the simile with the body of Christ, the marital bond, which – as Vermigli maintains – holds despite the local separation of husband and wife, could not have been forged if the two partners had never physically met. Physical nearness is crucial for there to be a marriage in the first place – which is why it does not seem entirely obvious why Vermigli would have chosen this example in a context where he wishes to downplay the importance of physical nearness. The third simile, where Vermigli likens the way believers scattered throughout the world are connected with each other to the unity with Christ in the sacrament, is perhaps the most fitting of the three used by Vermigli here, as it presupposes more than a mere looking-at from afar as in the case of the sun, on the one hand, while, on the other hand, taking into account what is not possible with the marriage simile; namely that I can be one in Christ with someone whom I will never physically meet.

limiting character in the present context. Any kind of sacramental presence that deserves the name – and certainly the kind of presence Vermigli is arguing for – transcends notions of mere physical enclosure. Nonetheless, Vermigli does not seem to be able to break out of the space-centred framework. This paradoxically results in him cementing the spatial nature of the relationship between Christ and his faithful, and in particular the distance between them. For the more he stresses the power of faith to *overcome* the gulf between the faithful on earth and Christ in heaven, the more he entrenches the perception of this very gulf.

5) Which Change? Hunsinger, Vermigli and the Status of the Eucharistic Elements

As we have seen, Vermigli argues that Christians can be intimately connected with the human nature of Christ despite there being a spatial gulf between them. Though this argument is made in the context of the Eucharistic controversies, however, the union between Christ and his faithful that it promotes is in fact independent of the sacrament. This section will argue that Vermigli's effective circumventing of the sacramental elements renders problematic George Hunsinger's appeal to Vermigli as a source for a proposal of a new ecumenical notion of the sacramental change. That Vermigli nonetheless ascribes importance to the sacrament and its physical aspects is primarily due to its role with regard to the union of the faithful with Christ.

Vermigli's effective bypassing of the sacramental elements is perhaps best illustrated by means of the categories established by Henri de Lubac in his famous study *Corpus Mysticum*. De Lubac distinguished three aspects of the one body of Christ: the historical body (the body born of the Virgin), the Eucharistic body (signified by bread and wine), and the ecclesial body (the body of the church).⁹⁵ He studied the relationship between these three bodies, indicating how the Church Fathers and theologians of the Middle Ages consistently emphasized the unity of the one body of Christ, while nonetheless distinguishing its three aspects. De Lubac moreover showed that these theologians particularly linked the Eucharistic and the ecclesial bodies – taking their cue

⁹⁵ Henri de Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum: The Eucharist and the Church in the Middle Ages*, trans. G. Simmonds (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007).

from 1 Cor 10:16-17 (“Is not ... the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body.”) Based on a change in the use of the predicates *verum* and *mysticum* as applied to the body of Christ,⁹⁶ De Lubac shows how this special connection between the Eucharistic and ecclesial bodies gradually came to be replaced by a special association between the Eucharistic and historical bodies:

Of the three terms: historical body, sacramental body and ecclesial body ... that it was a case of putting into order amongst each other, that is to say simultaneously to oppose and unite them to one another, the caesura was originally placed between the first and the second, whereas it subsequently came to be placed between the second and the third.⁹⁷

Describing Vermigli’s Eucharistic theology by means of this framework shows that his doctrine of a spiritual communication between Christ and the faithful associates the two elements of the body of Christ that had not been hitherto associated, namely the historical body and the ecclesial body. If the body of the church can be built up directly through a spiritual communion with the historical body of Christ, however, this means that the middle of the three terms listed above – the sacramental body – is bypassed.

This does not mean, however, that Vermigli wished to abolish the bodily aspect of the breaking of the bread. As we shall see below, he has his reasons for ascribing importance to it. Still, the fact that Vermigli’s Eucharistic theology bypasses the sacramental body on a fundamental level nonetheless indicates a problem with George Hunsinger’s use of Vermigli as a source in *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*.⁹⁸ Hunsinger draws on Vermigli precisely to argue for a new proposal about the sacramental body of Christ. Vermigli is one of the core sources on the Protestant side in his project to propose a doctrine of Christ’s real presence in the Eucharistic elements that can be accepted by

⁹⁶ Hans Boersma helpfully summarises these shifts and how de Lubac evaluated them as follows: “Over time, in the High Middle Ages, the word ‘true’ (*verum*) moved from the ecclesial body to the eucharistic body: Christ’s body in the Eucharist came to be seen as ‘the true body’. At the same time, the word ‘mystical’ (*mysticum*) moved from the eucharistic body to the ecclesial body: the church as the body of Christ came to be seen as ‘the mystical body’. To be sure, de Lubac does not take issue with the use of the term ‘mystical body’ to describe the church, but he does believe that the *overall* shift in terminology - with the word ‘true’ being used for the eucharistic body and the term ‘mystical’ being reserved for the ecclesial body - is problematic. For de Lubac, these linguistic shifts reflected (1) an increasing focus on the real presence in the Eucharist (the ‘true’ body of Christ); and (2) a loss of the sacramental connection between the eucharistic and the ecclesial body of Christ.” Boersma, *Heavenly Participation*, 117.

⁹⁷ De Lubac, *Corpus Mysticum*, 256.

⁹⁸ Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*.

the Reformed tradition while not being church-dividing from a Catholic point of view. Hunsinger deems Vermigli a “weighty thinker whose ideas today seem full of ecumenical promise”⁹⁹ because he, together with Bucer and Cranmer, found “nothing objectionable” in a sacramental change of the elements along the lines proposed by Hunsinger.¹⁰⁰ In particular, he argues that Vermigli was “open, more explicitly [than Calvin], to a relationship of Eucharistic elevation, conversion, and mutual indwelling, along the lines of the iron in the fire.”¹⁰¹ The image of an iron rod thrust into the fire – where the iron is transformed by the fire, without ceasing to be iron – is Hunsinger’s favourite illustration for his proposed “traselementation” of the bread and wine.

In the context of his discussion of Theophylact’s statement “that bread is transformed, converted, and traselemented,” Vermigli indeed wrote that “if these words are taken sacramentally we do not mind.”¹⁰² Similarly, during the Oxford Disputation, Vermigli stated that Theophylact’s terms “changing,” “transforming” and “traselementing” as applied to the bread were admissible “because of the sacramental change.”¹⁰³ These two references, on which Hunsinger bases Vermigli’s alleged endorsement of traselementation, highlight not only that Vermigli was less than enthusiastic about traselementation than Hunsinger makes it seem, but also that the real question here is about the nature of what Vermigli calls the sacramental change.

For what is it that is changed in and through the Eucharist? Vermigli’s answer to this question features the Eucharistic elements at best only secondarily. Hunsinger himself says this along the lines we have seen above, admitting that for Vermigli, “the primary union and communion in the Eucharist were always between Christ and the communicants, not between Christ and the elements.”¹⁰⁴ Any change of the elements is always in view of, and therefore subordinated to, the union between Christ and the communicants. Or, as Vermigli phrases it, Christ is more joined with his faithful than with

⁹⁹ Ibid., 39.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 45.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 92.

¹⁰² “Ait panem transformari, converti et traselementari, quas locutiones, si accipiat sacramentaliter, non abhorremus.” (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, 45r; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 90.)

¹⁰³ “Et verba Theophylacti mutandi, transformandi atque traselementandi concedimus, propter conversionem sacramentalem.” (Vermigli, *Disputatio*, 52r; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 218.)

¹⁰⁴ Hunsinger, *The Eucharist and Ecumenism*, 40.

the Eucharistic symbols, “because the latter union was created on account of the former.”¹⁰⁵

As we will see in what follows, the primary act of eating or *manducatio* for Vermigli is spiritual: believers spiritually partake of a spiritual reality, thereby furthering their union with Christ. Despite this, Vermigli grants that the Eucharist, as an embodied practice, ‘adds value’ to the spiritual affairs. First, Vermigli believes that the physical act of partaking in the sacrament in some way assists the spiritual *manducatio* and its ensuing union with Christ. Secondly, he believes with the Church Fathers that partaking in the Eucharist is not only conducive to the spiritual renewal of human beings, but also to the renewal of their bodies. Let us consider Vermigli’s elucidation of each of these statements in turn, beginning with his focus on the spiritual eating.

As Salvatore Corda has shown, Vermigli bases his Eucharistic teaching more on John 6 than on any of the synoptic institution narratives.¹⁰⁶ This is telling, as he does not think that the bread of which Jesus speaks in John 6 has anything to do with the sacramental elements. Rather, Vermigli argues that Jesus refers to a spiritual appropriation of the salvific power of Christ’s death on the cross, when he says for instance in verse 51: “I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” Jesus is the bread of life, and to eat this bread means to believe in him who offered himself to be broken on the cross for the salvation of the world.¹⁰⁷

In the words of Corda, this means that for Vermigli, the Johannine account of a spiritual eating of Christ’s body is “prior to, and in a sense independent of, the institution of the Lord’s Supper.”¹⁰⁸ This is seen for instance in the Oxford Treatise, where Vermigli writes that “in John 6 Christ promised his flesh or body and blood for food and drink” and continues that “he does this as often as we truly believe that he died for us.” It was only

¹⁰⁵ “...quia ea coniunctio propter istam adinuenta fuit.” (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, 45r; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 90.)

¹⁰⁶ Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 108–12.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 108–10. See on this the following passage from the *Defensio*: “In sexto Johannis nihil aliud tradit, nisi simplicem nodamque doctrinam. Ait enim corpus suum, et sanguinem, quae daturus erat ad salutem humani generis, tanto fore usui fidelibus, quanto corpore nostro est cibus, et potus. ... Ita corpus et sanguis Christi oblata in cruce pro salute nostra debent nobis esse in omnem vitam pro cibo, et potu.” (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 563.)

¹⁰⁸ Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 110.

after Jesus had taught his disciples about this promise that he, in Vermigli's view, "added symbols to that spiritual eating" through the institution of the Eucharist.¹⁰⁹

One consequence of this is that Vermigli never exclusively equates partaking of Christ's body with the participation in the Eucharist. As Corda has demonstrated, Vermigli holds that Christ's flesh can be appropriated both *per sacramentum* and *citra sacramentum*. This means that Christ's flesh and blood can also be eaten and drunk independently from the use of the sacrament.¹¹⁰ This is the case, for instance, every time believers hear the proclamation of God's word with faith.¹¹¹ Vermigli is clear that believers receive the same body of Christ in both cases – by hearing God's word or by participating in the Eucharist.¹¹² He declares "we are sanctified by the body of Christ insofar as we apprehend through faith that he was once offered on the cross and now sits at the right hand of God the father."¹¹³ Corda is therefore right to observe that "strictly speaking, in Vermigli's system our sanctification is not only *independent from*, but also *prior to* the use of the sacraments."¹¹⁴

However, what *is* the role of the sacraments "in Vermigli's system"? In order to answer this question, we need to return once more to Vermigli's doctrine of the believer's union with Christ. In the two letters on this doctrine that we have considered in chapter two, Vermigli calls the sacraments the 'bonds' that connect Christ the head to his ecclesial body. These bonds are especially necessary in the mysterious 'middle' communion in which believers have *begun* to be fully spiritually united with their Lord. They are bound to Christ, Vermigli writes to Calvin, "by certain spiritual knots and joints." These "bonds or fastenings," however, depend on and are derived from the head himself.¹¹⁵ They are

¹⁰⁹ "Respondemus Christum promissione suam carnem vel suum corpus aut sanguinem in cibum et potum idque 6 loan. Quod praestat quoties illum vere pro nobis mortuum credimus, praestiti etiam cum in coena hoc sacramentum institueret, nam illi manducationi spirituali addidit symbola." (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, 27r; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 62.)

¹¹⁰ Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 131. Cf. "Caro et sanguis Christi etiam extra sacramentum eduntur et bibuntur." (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 291.)

¹¹¹ "Corpus Christi non minus in verbis percipi quam in symbolis." (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 683.)

¹¹² Cf. Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 153 n. 59.

¹¹³ "Nos autem ita dicimus nos sanctificari corpore Christi, quatenus illud oblatum olim in crucem, nunc autem sedens ad dextram dei patris apprehenditur a nobis per fidem. Hic est status et cardo controversiae." (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 817.)

¹¹⁴ Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 169.

¹¹⁵ "Abunde satis est ut nexibus atque compagibus quibusdam spiritualibus illi nectamur. Quae tamen vincula seu colligationes ab ipso capite pendent ac derivantur." (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1095; McLelland and Duffield, *The Life, Early Letters and Eucharistic Writings of Peter Martyr*, 347.)

faith, the word of God and the sacraments: “Through them the Spirit, flowing from our head and diffused throughout the church, quickens and shapes his members by a just proportion.”¹¹⁶

In the same letter, Vermigli argues for the need of such joints or bonds precisely because of the spatial distance between believers and Christ – confirming our analysis above. Despite the “distance of place,” he writes, believers in the middle communion with Christ “always consider this, that they may become more like him.” A fuller union with Christ “may be enjoyed while we live on earth, even though the very body of Christ sit and reign in heaven with the Father” precisely because there are the bonds of faith, the scriptures and sacraments between the two.¹¹⁷ Vermigli grants that the sacraments and the word of God are “joints and fastenings through which the spirit of God becomes effective.” He makes it equally clear, however, that faith is primary. Nothing else than faith is necessary to be united with Christ – not even the outward word or the sacraments: “The only link and fastening necessary in adults is faith, by which we are joined with Christ himself, inseparably.”¹¹⁸ Whereas faith is therefore the primary channel for communication between Christ and his faithful, the external word and the sacraments are such channels in a derivative and secondary manner insofar as they are effective instruments by which faith is kindled.

What is clear so far is that Vermigli closely relates the sacraments to the middle union, that is, to the union between Christ and his faithful, which Vermigli also terms ‘mystical’ and ‘secret’. What, however, is the exact nature of the relationship between this union and the sacraments? In his letter to Beza on the same issue, Vermigli is more

¹¹⁶ “Et ea sunt fides comprimis verba Dei et Sacramenta. Per ista spiritus a nostro capite dimanans per Ecclesiam divagatur et sua membra proportionem iustam vegetat et assimilatur.” (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1095; McLelland and Duffield, *The Life, Early Letters and Eucharistic Writings of Peter Martyr*, 347.)

¹¹⁷ “Nam membra Christi semper eo spectant, ut eius similia evadant. Neque communionem hanc mysticam impediunt locorum spatia, sed dum in terris degimus haberi potest, licet ipsum Christi corpus in coelis cum patre sedeatur atque regnet. Abunde satis est ut nexibus atque compagibus quibusdam spiritualibus illi nectamur. Quae tamen vincula seu colligationes ab ipso capite pendent ac derivantur. Et ea sunt fides comprimis, verba Dei et Sacramenta.” (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1095; McLelland and Duffield, *The Life, Early Letters and Eucharistic Writings of Peter Martyr*, 347.)

¹¹⁸ “Sunt etiam compagine et commissurae per quas spiritus Dei fiat efficax. ... Fidei una est in adultis compago et commissura necessaria, qua Christo ipsi et quidem indivulse aptamur.” (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1095; McLelland and Duffield, *The Life, Early Letters and Eucharistic Writings of Peter Martyr*, 348.)

specific about this, writing that the sacraments both confirm and increase the middle union:

Of this intimate conjunction [viz. the 'middle' union] both Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not idle, but most certain symbols. We are made partakers of this kind of conjunction the moment we believe in Christ; and because faith must be employed in the profitable reception of the sacraments, when we make use of the sacraments, this conjunction is confirmed and increased.¹¹⁹

As for the element of confirmation, it is to be remembered that Vermigli is a vehement opponent of any kind of *manducatio impiorum*. Whoever has no real faith in Christ, according to Vermigli, does not eat the body of Christ in the Eucharist.¹²⁰ The "profitable reception" of the Eucharist, therefore necessarily implies faith, and faith in turn implies a mystical union with Christ. Therefore, Vermigli can say that the Eucharist – when received in faith – confirms the believer's mystical union with Christ. When he says that the Eucharist increases the middle union, then he equally means the Eucharist as received in faith. For those who have already begun to be in union with Christ, the Eucharist can spur their faith further. When someone's faith grows stronger, however, an increasing abundance of God's spirit flows into them, which means that they become more fully conjunct with the mystical body of Christ.¹²¹

Given that both the confirmation and the increase of union with Christ that Vermigli ascribes to the sacrament are therefore derived from faith, is there any advantage of the use of the Eucharist over against 'simply believing', or the exercise of unmediated faith? One advantage, in Vermigli's view, is that the physical and external dimension of the sacrament assists the spiritual and internal 'main event'. So even if the real communion, based on faith, remains wholly spiritual, human beings can take part in

¹¹⁹ "Huiusque intimae coniunctionis, cum baptismus tum Coena Domini sunt certissima symbola, eaque non inania. Etenim communicationis huiusmodi, statim ut in Christum credimus, participes redditur, et quia in sacramentis utiliter percipiendis fides adhibenda est, idcirco per eam coniunctio illa, dum Sacramentis utimur et confirmatur et augetur." (Vermigli, *Loci Communes* (1583), 1109; Vermigli, *Life, Letters, and Sermons*, 136 [translation adapted].)

¹²⁰ On Vermigli's stance on the *manducatio impiorum*, see Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 158–64. See also McLelland: "Martyr states that unless the communion with Christ is enjoyed before the eating of the Eucharist, we are aliens from Him since we lack faith." (McLelland, *The Visible Words of God*, 163.)

¹²¹ "Non tamen inficiamur, ex usu sacramentorum excitari in nobis fidem, qua maior in nos derivetur copia spiritus ut nos in mysticum illud Christi corpus magis magisque insinuemus." (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 504–5.)

it more effectively when they do so with all their senses. Vermigli states that God added the symbols to words,

so that we are urged to salvation not only through hearing, but also through sight, taste, touch and smell. For he is our maker, no one knows better than him how feeble we are with regard to celestial and spiritual matters. This is why he thought of so many modes to assist us.¹²²

Vermigli therefore argues that the external eating of the sacrament was added to the internal eating of the flesh of Christ because of a kind of divine pedagogy. God considers the finite and fallen state of human beings – they are slow to perceive spiritual matters and weak in learning about them – and graciously accommodates to it by adding sensual elements to spiritual realities so as to render them more easily understandable. Or, in Vermigli's own words: "We should eat his flesh and blood [in believing that Christ was delivered to death for us]. To do this more effectively, symbols of bread and wine were added, moving us more powerfully than mere words."¹²³ So even though there are other ways in which to eat Christ's body and blood, this happens "most clearly" or "most illustriously" in the Eucharist, "because the sacraments of the body and blood are perceived by means of our bodies."¹²⁴

One *raison d'être* of the Eucharist as a practice, for Vermigli, is therefore pedagogical. The physical reality of the sacrament exists here as a mere function of the spiritual connection between Christ and his believers. Because, however, he wishes his own position to be in agreement with the Church fathers, Vermigli also has to account for sayings of the Fathers that value the bodily dimension of the Eucharist in its own right. In particular, he wants to explain how it can be said that the bodies of the communicants are transformed through partaking of the body of Christ. Is the fact that Vermigli believes the Eucharist has the potential to transform not only the spirit but also the body of believers another reason why he wants to retain the sacrament as a practice? Is it a

¹²² "Adiecit autem symbola, ut not tantum auribus, sed etiam oculis, gustu, tactu, olfactu ad salute incitaremur. Ille enim est factor noster: nemoque illo melius novit, ad coelestia, et spiritualia quanta nostra sit hebetudo: ideoque nobis tot modis censuit succurrendum." (Ibid., 683.)

¹²³ "Id credendo, manducaremus carnem et sanguinem eius. Quod ut efficacius fieret et panis et vini symbola fuerunt addita, quae vehementius nos permoverent quam simplicia verba conserverint." (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, 28v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 65.)

¹²⁴ "Christum verum corpus, veram carnem, et verum sanguinem habuisse, per quae et ille nobiscum, et nos cum illo coniungamur, cum illa per fidem haurimus, et quodammodo in nos recipimus. Quod etsi alibi quoque fieri potest, tamen illustrissime fit in Coena, cum nostri corporis ministerio sacramenta corporis et sanguinis percipiuntur." (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 291.)

reason, moreover, that takes seriously the embodied nature of the Eucharist for its own sake?

As part of his engagement with the Fathers, Vermigli repeatedly holds that the saving power of Christ's body passes into the believers' bodies. This means, as Corda observed, that Vermigli is "able to accept, perhaps more than other Reformed theologians, the idea expressed by several Church Fathers, that our flesh truly receives Christ's flesh and that we are united with Christ *corporaliter*."¹²⁵ The way Vermigli goes about accepting this patristic idea, however, is through a strict priority of the spiritual dimension, which governs whatever bodily dimension is added secondarily. The body of Christ is received spiritually by faith, but because Christ thereby communicates his character to the believers, their whole nature is transformed, including their bodies:

The virtue and efficacy of the body of Christ does not stop in the spirit (where it is received by faith), but also reaches to our body and restores and spiritually transforms it. [Therefore] it is not absurd to say that our flesh receives the body of the Lord.¹²⁶

The language used by Vermigli in this context is often one of in- and overflowing: Christ pours divine qualities such as immortality and happiness into the believers' souls through their spiritual union (*transfundere*). From this spiritual union, the divine qualities secondarily also overflow to the bodies of the believers (*redundare*).¹²⁷ In short: true union with Christ "is related first to the soul, and then overflows to the body."¹²⁸

The fact that he holds that the grace received in the Eucharist redounds also to the body of the believer, does not mean, however, that Vermigli's circumvention of the Eucharistic elements as seen above really is attenuated. Neither does it counterbalance his emphasis on spiritual matters through a more embodied approach. He makes sense of

¹²⁵ Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 177.

¹²⁶ "Primum enim caro nostra accipit symbolum, quod appellatur corpus domini. Deinde etiam cum virtus, et efficacia corporis Christi non sistat in animo, a quo recipitur per fidem, sed etiam ad corpus nostrum pertingat, illudque reficiat, et spiritualiter immutet, non absurde dicere possumus, carnem nostrum recipere corpus domini." (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 298.)

¹²⁷ See e.g. "Transfundit divinas illa qualitates, et dotes suas virtutum, immortalitatis, foelicitatis, primum in animum, cui spiritualiter unitur, deinde etiam in corpus nostrum." (Ibid., 745.) "Nam cum animus fide particeps fiat, dum communicamus, corporis et sanguinis Christi, reddatque mundus, coelestis, divinus, ac sanctus, redundant etiam eadem proprietates ad carnem et sanguinem nostrum." (Ibid., 70.). Similarly also Ibid., 728.

¹²⁸ "Vera coniunctio cum Christo ... quae prima ad animam pertinet, deinde ad corpus redundat." (Vermigli, *Tractatio*, 66v; Vermigli, *Oxford Treatise and Disputation*, 124.)

those patristic sources that prize the effect of the eating of the Eucharist on the body by conceiving of a kind of detour through the spirit from which it returns to affect the body. The fruit of the Eucharist unequivocally pertains to the spiritual world – the physical elements are merely auxiliary to the spiritual union of the faithful with Christ. From the heights of this spiritual union, the sacrament subsequently affects the bodies of the communicants as if in a kind of return (*redire*).¹²⁹ Or, in the words of Salvatore Corda: “Christ’s body does not reach and sanctify our spirit by passing through our bodies, but just the opposite is true: sanctification reaches our spirit first and from there it spreads to our body.”¹³⁰

Whatever effect the Eucharist has on the bodies of believers, it is strictly related to the union with Christ. As we have seen in the last chapter, union with Christ, for Vermigli, is oriented towards the eschaton. It is the beginning of the new life of the resurrection, even if this has to remain inchoate while here on earth. This is why Vermigli can say that human nature “though it is corrupt, sinful and mortal is rendered capable of ... holiness, incorruptibility and immortality” through the overflowing of the spiritual union with Christ that believers enjoy.¹³¹

The challenge remains: if the true eating of the body of Christ is a spiritual matter, as John 6 teaches, can the sacramental signs mean anything more than a means by which a weak Christian calls to mind the death of Christ? McLelland argues that Vermigli deals with this question by teaching “a sacramental mutation which can be said to come to the element because of the change in believers through the means of the sacrament.”¹³² As we have seen above, however, the sacramental mutation described by McLelland is removed at least three times over from the actual sacramental signs: the signs aid and augment faith, faith unites believers to Christ and this union with Christ changes believers to become more Christ-like. It seems therefore at least a stretch to hold, with McLelland, that Vermigli ascribed much of a mutation to the elements themselves. It is even more of

¹²⁹ “Fructus vero, et saginatio ita pertinet ad animum, ut ab eo redeat etiam ad corpus.” (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 726.)

¹³⁰ Corda, *Veritas Sacramenti*, 177.

¹³¹ “Nam ea licet natura corrupta sint, et vitiola, et mortalia, conditionum tamen longe diversarum redduntur capacia: nimirum sanctitatis, incorruptionis et immortalitatis.” (Vermigli, *Defensio*, 70.)

¹³² McLelland, *The Visible Words of God*, 222.

a stretch to postulate that one could base an ecumenical proposal about the presence of Christ in the Eucharistic elements on Vermigli's theology, as Hunsinger does.

6) The Implied Metaphysics of Vermigli's Eucharistic Theology

We have seen that Vermigli's theological thinking in the polemic situation of the Eucharistic debates is determined by a kind of hyper-spatiality. Even heaven is a space, though its place is far away from earth. He takes it for granted that the relationship between God and the world is one of spatial distance. The gulf between God and the world, for Vermigli, can only be overcome between either a kind of spatial rapprochement, or through spiritually bridging the distance. Deeming the former impossible, he opts for the latter, insisting that the spatial distance between Christ in heaven and believers on earth is not relevant because it can be overcome spiritually.

This theological move to overcome the distance created by the hyper-spatiality of his system, however, has a flipside to it, for it entails a devaluation of the physicality of the world. This manifests itself in particular in Vermigli's understanding of the materiality of the Eucharist, which he cannot value in its own right.¹³³ Put differently: because Vermigli had to introduce faith and the power of the Holy Spirit as central theological forces to bridge the spatial gap between God and the world, they become the prime media of experiencing God. This, however depreciates the value of the Eucharist as an embodied practice.

What does all of this mean for our study of Vermigli's implied metaphysics? Others have argued that a new and dominant concept of space emerged at the beginning of modernity, and that this concept constructed space as an abstract continuum, with no room for particularity.¹³⁴ Vermigli's tendency to determine the relationship between God and creation spatially, and the way he frames this spatiality, can be seen as part of this

¹³³ Brandy equally observed that in Vermigli's work, "spiritualizing and physical-objective ideas stand next to each other," as he has both a spiritualist focus in his Eucharistic theology and a local understanding of heaven. (Hans Christian Brandy, *Die späte Christologie des Johannes Brenz* [Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1991], 91, my own translation.) Brandy moreover reasoned that this was no contradiction, but an expression of Vermigli's aim to retain a clear distinction between God and man, heaven and earth. From the argument above I would contend that he thereby misjudged an unspoken presupposition for a motive.

¹³⁴ Cf. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Pickstock, *After Writing: On the Liturgical Consummation of Philosophy*, chapter two; Johannes Hoff, *The Analogical Turn: Rethinking Modernity with Nicholas of Cusa* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2013), part two.

larger development. Moreover, this transformation of the concept of space, and its new prevalence has also been related to a univocal understanding of being. This seems plausible, for if the primary category in which to understand the difference between God's being and the being of the world is their distance from each other, then their relationship is not determined by a different quality of their respective being. This means that we can conclude *ex negativo* that the metaphysical framework sustaining the reasoning which envisages the relationship between God and the world to be determined spatially must be based on a univocal understanding of being.

Similarly, the way Vermigli envisages Christ's presence in and through the Eucharistic elements also points to a univocal understanding of divine and earthly being. Vermigli could have conceived of an intensified Divine presence in the elements if his thought had inhabited a metaphysical framework which allows for real inherence through metaphysical participation. The fact that he is unable to envisage such a presence, and that any 'presence' of Christ in the elements is tantamount, for him, to the attempt to spatially conflate two distant entities, indicates that he does not operate in a metaphysical framework which allows for different intensities of being. Because Vermigli lacks concepts of real inherence which are not based on spatiality, we can again conclude negatively that this part of his theological universe does *not* inhabit a metaphysical framework which allows for different qualities of being, where a transcendent reality can be at the heart of a created reality without being 'there' in the same way as the latter.

At his most polemical, in the Eucharistic controversies, Vermigli's thought is therefore inhabiting a univocal metaphysics. Nevertheless, there are elements in his Eucharistic thinking which either indicate that he is aware of the limitations of this framework, or that he actively aims to go beyond it. The former can be seen most clearly in the way in which Vermigli criticises his opponents. As we have seen above, he accuses his Catholic opponents of envisaging Christ's presence in crudely spatial terms. This means that when analysing his opponents' arguments, Vermigli is aware of the limitations of a spatial and univocal determination of the relationship between God and the world. As we have equally seen, however, this does not mean that he himself overcomes these shortcomings.

Another instance where Vermigli seems to perceive the limitations of a spatially determined relationship between God and the world – without, however, overcoming it

– is his critique of the Lutheran theologian Johannes Brenz. In his *Dialogus*, Vermigli criticises Brenz’ understanding of the ubiquity of both natures of Christ in its application to the doctrine of the Eucharist. Brenz claims that Christ is present in the Eucharist because Christ, in his human nature, is ubiquitous. As we have seen, Vermigli draws on the Church Fathers to refute Brenz’ understanding of ubiquity, and instead insists that in his human nature, Christ sits at the right hand of the Father. Vermigli therefore challenges Brenz’ understanding of Christ’s presence as being contained in a finite local space and, we might say, by implication also the univocal metaphysics behind it. Yet by insisting that Christ is in heaven, Vermigli merely argues that Christ is in a *different* local space. Hence, he does not *fundamentally* call into question the spatialized nature of Christ’s presence or replace the univocal metaphysical framework sustaining it.

Nevertheless, Vermigli actively aims to go beyond a spatial understanding of the relationship between God and the world in his teaching about the union with Christ. We have seen in chapter two how this doctrine implies a real inherence of Christ in those united to him. Given that the union with Christ is at the heart of Vermigli’s ‘positive’ teaching of the Eucharist – he thinks that the Eucharist fosters and fastens this union – there must be a non-spatial and non-univocal understanding of the relationship between God and the world in his Eucharistic thinking, too. This is evident, for instance, in the way Vermigli describes the effects of the union with Christ. We have seen how Vermigli considers the Eucharist to be a ‘joint’ between Christ and his faithful, through which Christ pours his spirit into them. He also speaks about how Christ’s spirit overflows into the bodies of believers, and how they begin to take on Christ’s nature. This language arises from and is motivated by Vermigli’s literacy in the patristics. For the Church Fathers, the imagery of partaking in Christ was sustained by a metaphysics of participation in the Divine.¹³⁵ Vermigli’s use of the same language still conveys an attempt to go beyond the space-focussed and metaphysically univocal terms set by a polemically entrenched debate. Yet the attempt is not carried through insofar as the Patristic language he uses remains largely severed from its original metaphysical context. Vermigli’s fight to repress any notion of a (in his view) crass physical intermingling of the Divine with created reality

¹³⁵ For Augustine, see e.g. David Vincent Meconi, “St. Augustine’s Early Theory of Participation,” *Augustinian Studies*, 1996, Volume 27, Issue 2, Pp. 79 - 96 27, no. 2 (1996): 79–96.

thereby prevents the more mystical sides of his theology – as inspired by the Church Fathers – to come to full fruition.

We can conclude that Vermigli's largely polemical Eucharistic theology is mainly sustained by an implicit univocal metaphysical framework. Certain elements of his Eucharistic thinking nevertheless display to some extent an alternative metaphysical framework based on participation in the Divine. However, in Vermigli's Eucharistic theology as a whole, the balance is more weighted towards the univocal framework.

In the next chapter, we shall widen our focus from the Eucharistic table to Vermigli's vision of the whole commonwealth. We will see that in Vermigli's political theology, the same two metaphysical frameworks as those which we have encountered in the present chapter are implicitly at work.

Chapter Four: Political Theology and the Workings of Authority

An extraordinarily large proportion of Vermigli's *oeuvre* is devoted to political concerns.¹ This is not surprising, for two reasons. First, political issues had urgency and an existential dimension for a man who fled persecution by authorities no less than twice in his life. For instance, Vermigli's answer to the question as to whether Christians ought to resist authorities that coerce them to act against their conscience in religious matters, was partly given by decisions he took in his own life. While still in his native Italy, he had opted against resistance and chosen to leave the country. When he was again forced into exile after the ascent to the throne of Mary Tudor, Vermigli denied his support to fellow exiles who wanted to oppose the Catholic queen violently.²

The second reason it does not come as a surprise that Vermigli wrote much on political matters is the fact that he lectured extensively on the 'historical' books of the Old Testament, which gave him ample occasion to reflect on the nature of good government.³ He taught the book of Judges during his second stay at Strasbourg in 1554-1556, and 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings in Zurich 1556-1562.⁴ Most of the 'political' *scholia* in part IV of the *Common Places* are taken from one of the commentaries that originate in these lectures, such as, for example, the *scholia* on the authority of princes and magistrates, tyranny, rebellion, exile and war.

It has been said that Vermigli's thought cannot be appreciated as a whole unless one attends to his political writings.⁵ Hence, this chapter addresses the political part of

¹ Robert Kingdon has highlighted this through comparing the space devoted to political topics in the *Loci Communes* with other comparable reference works (like Calvin's *Institutes* and Melancthon's *Loci Communes*). Cf. Robert M. Kingdon, *The Political Thought of Peter Martyr Vermigli: Selected Texts and Commentary* (Genève: Droz, 1980), iii.

² Cf. Marvin W. Anderson, "Royal Idolatry: Peter Martyr and the Reformed Tradition," *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte* 69 (1978): 174–75.

³ For a new and fascinating study of the phenomenon of the political use of the Old Testament in early modern England, see Kevin Killeen, *The Political Bible in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁴ The commentary on Judges was prepared for print by Vermigli and first printed in 1561: Pietro Martire Vermigli, *In librum iudicum ... commentarii doctissimi* (Zurich: Ch. Froschauer, 1561). The commentaries on the books of Samuel and Kings appeared posthumously, based on lecture manuscripts that Vermigli left behind: Vermigli, *Samuelis*; Vermigli, *Melachim*.

⁵ Cf. W. J. Torrance Kirby, "Political Theology: The Godly Prince," in *A Companion to Peter Martyr Vermigli*, ed. W. J. Torrance Kirby, Emidio Campi, and Frank A. James (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009), 401.

Vermigli's work. As in previous chapters, however, I will outline Vermigli's arguments only insofar as it is pertinent to our main focus, which is to examine the underlying metaphysical frameworks of his work. In the first section, I will survey the existing secondary literature on Vermigli's political writings. Sections two to four are exegetical, focussing on the two *foci* of authority in Vermigli's ideal political commonwealth. Section five returns to an engagement with secondary literature, focussing specifically on the work of Torrance Kirby. Kirby has maintained that Vermigli's political theology displays complex interplay between the ecclesiastical and civil jurisdictions, made possible by a sharp distinction between the outward and the inward realms. While, as I will argue, this second part of his argument fails to convince fully, Kirby is nonetheless right in observing a tension between two fundamentally different architectures of authority in Vermigli's work. This duality, I will argue, points to the much more fundamental, metaphysical duality that we have encountered before, and which is so characteristic for Vermigli's work.

I will argue that there are two fundamentally different frameworks of authority at play in Vermigli's thought. The difference between them concerns which relationship they imply between God and human institutions such as governments and the church. In the one framework, princes or magistrates have authority because they participate in God's power. God's authority, in this case, is seen at work in human structures of power. The reason Vermigli partly adheres to this framework is that it is conducive to the formation of a peaceful and unified community, something Vermigli saw as the ideal. He moreover deemed the people of Israel in the Old Testament to be a model of such a unified community.

The other framework of authority, which is equally present in Vermigli's work, manifests itself in his understanding of the word of God. The direct authority of the word of God, Vermigli holds, circumvents worldly institutions, and indeed competes with them. This structure, as we shall see, is non-hierarchical and its focus is not on the conditions for creating a unified commonwealth.

The aim of this chapter is to outline each of these frameworks of authority that Vermigli employs, based on a close study of his writings. I will moreover show in more detail how the two frameworks stand in tension with each other. First, however, I shall

turn to a brief survey of how scholars have engaged with Vermigli's political theology so far.

1) Engagements with Vermigli's Political Theology

The role Vermigli plays in Quentin Skinner's seminal work, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, though minor, is less than flattering. In his chapter on "The Duty to Resist", Skinner deems Vermigli to be "far from coherent." He reached this conclusion based on his reading of Vermigli's views on political resistance, asserting that the "later *Commentary on the Book of Judges* appears to withdraw much of what [Vermigli] had earlier allowed in his commentary on Romans."⁶ Skinner refers to the fact that Vermigli had allowed for a "constitutional theory of resistance" in his commentary on Romans 13:1-4. He taught that it is lawful for inferior magistrates – such as electors – to resist a higher magistrate if the latter abuses his office.⁷ As for the commentary on Judges, Skinner quotes from the section on Judges 8:22-23 where Vermigli insists that God alone appoints kings, and that the present state ought not to be altered without him.⁸ Skinner moreover refers to the *De Magistratu scholium* from the commentary on Judges 19, where Vermigli holds that subjects ought to suffer a tyrant, unless, that is, he forces them to do something that goes against the word of God.⁹ Skinner concludes from these two quotes that, in the Judges commentary, Vermigli had withdrawn the possibility of constitutional resistance. Instead, "passive disobedience rather than active resistance is all that remains open."¹⁰ This alleged development in Vermigli's thought, however, meant for Skinner that he "signally failed to achieve" "consistency".¹¹

⁶ Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought: The Age of Reformation*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 213.

⁷ Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 603–9. For an English translation, see: Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 1–15.

⁸ Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 106v–108r. For an English translation, see: Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 16–26.

⁹ Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 183r–191v, here 183v. For an English translation, see: Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 26–61.

¹⁰ Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2:216.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 2:229. It is only in the thought of "Calvinist Radicals" such as John Ponet, Christopher Goodman and John Knox, where consistency in the question of tyrants is achieved, Skinner holds, because the latter suggest that a tyrannical ruler is not appointed by God. Rather, "if the people find themselves with an idolatrous or tyrannical ruler, this can only mean that they made a mistake in selecting him. They must have failed to read the signs and follow the criteria which God has provided in order to enable us to recognise a truly godly prince." (*Ibid.*, 2:229–30.)

Is Skinner's judgement fair? It is to be noted, first of all, that whenever Vermigli elaborates on political matters, his raw materials are the biblical texts. Therefore, as Marvin Anderson has noted, Vermigli's elaboration on Judges 8:22-23 is to be seen not as propounding an abstract theory of sovereignty, but primarily as an exposition of a biblical text.¹² Vermigli proceeds from Gideon's refusal to become king of Israel even though the people wanted to make him king. In Vermigli's understanding of the text, Gideon acted rightly because it is God alone who appoints kings. What the people did, though they acted out of gratitude, was thus unlawful. This is the context in which Vermigli asserted that political states ought not to be changed without God – a context that does not *per se* deal with a theory of resistance, even though it may have implications for it. The same is true for the *De Magistratu scholium* at the end of Judges 19, where Vermigli primarily focuses on the respective roles of the civil magistrate and the church. The sentence quoted by Skinner is a mere aside in a paragraph on the different kinds of government according to Aristotle's *Politics*.

More importantly, however, at the end of his commentary on Judges 3, Vermigli explicitly reflects on "Whether it be lawful for subjects to rise against their princes", a passage that seems to have escaped Skinner's attention.¹³ Vermigli's stance here is identical to the one which he took in the Romans commentary.¹⁴ He holds that while it is unlawful for ordinary subjects to rebel against their princes, those who elect the superior power (such as the electors of the emperor in the Holy Roman Empire) can resist and constrain it. If necessary, this resistance may even happen violently. This, however, essentially undoes Skinner's claim that Vermigli was incoherent because he had changed his mind between the Romans and Judges commentaries.¹⁵

¹² Anderson, "Royal Idolatry," 183.

¹³ Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 64v–65r.

¹⁴ Robert Kingdon has argued that in both his commentaries on Romans 13 and on Judges 3, "Vermigli in effect adopts the position of the Saxon lawyers" who convinced Luther in 1530 that the German constitution allows for lower magistrates like Electors to oppose higher powers. (Robert M. Kingdon, "The Function of Law in the Political Thought of Peter Martyr Vermigli," in *Reformatio Perennis: Essays on Calvin and the Reformation in Honor of Ford Lewis Battles*, ed. B. A. Gerrish (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1981), 159–172, here 169.)

¹⁵ Gary Jenkins has attempted to challenge Skinner's verdict of Vermigli in a different, yet unsuccessful way. Jenkins held that because "Vermigli actually lectured on both books in Strasbourg at the same time", Skinner's argument about a development in Vermigli's thought between the Romans and Judges commentaries was invalid (Gary Jenkins, "Citizen Vermigli: The Political Animal in Vermigli's Commonwealth," *Reformation & Renaissance Review* 15, no. 1 (2013): 84–98, here 86.) It is, however, historically incorrect that Vermigli lectured on Romans and Judges at the same time. He taught Judges

Nevertheless, credit must be given to Skinner for taking Vermigli's contribution to political thought seriously. This is especially remarkable given that Skinner's book was published at a time when scholars studying Vermigli had not yet turned to his political theology, but had instead mainly focused on his sacramental contributions. Interest in his political theology only arose in the late 1970s through the work of Robert Kingdon and Marvin Anderson. The former published an annotated anthology of some of the most important of Vermigli's political writings, in the *Travaux d'humanisme et Renaissance*,¹⁶ along with a series of articles on the issue,¹⁷ whereas the latter contributed an article in the *Archiv für Reformationsgeschichte*.¹⁸ Since then, a handful of other scholars have engaged with Vermigli's political thought,¹⁹ with the weightiest contribution from Torrance Kirby, who has published no fewer than three versions of his essay on Vermigli's *De Magistratu scholium*.²⁰

Kirby will be an important interlocutor in what follows, as his approach offers one way of making sense of the tensions that are present in Vermigli's ideal order of society. First, however, I shall turn to this very order, outlining the architecture of Vermigli's ideal commonwealth. I will focus on its two foci of authority in turn: the king or magistrate, and the Word of God.

during his second stay in Strasbourg, but as Marvin Anderson has shown, the Romans commentary "was near completion before Martyr left England" in late 1553, where he had taught Romans at the University of Oxford. (Anderson, *Peter Martyr, A Reformer in Exile (1542-1562): A Chronology of Biblical Writings in England and Europe*, 313.)

¹⁶ Kingdon, *Political Thought*. Kingdon reproduces English translations prepared by Vermigli's contemporaries and published in the Elizabethan period, mainly Anthony Marten's 1583 translation of the *Common Places* (cf. xxv).

¹⁷ Robert M. Kingdon, "Peter Martyr Vermigli and the Marks of the True Church," in *Continuity and Discontinuity in Church History: Essays Presented to George Huntston Williams on the Occasion of His 65th Birthday*, ed. F. Forrester Church and Timothy George (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 198–214; Robert M. Kingdon, "The Political Thought of Peter Martyr Vermigli," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and Italian Reform*, ed. Joseph C. McLelland (Waterloo: Wilfried Laurier University Press, 1980), 121–39; Kingdon, "The Function of Law in the Political Thought of Peter Martyr Vermigli."

¹⁸ Anderson, "Royal Idolatry."

¹⁹ Giulio Orazio Bravi, "Über die intellektuellen Wurzeln des Republikanismus von Peter Martyr Vermigli," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli: Humanism, Republicanism, Reformation*, ed. Emidio Campi (Genève: Droz, 2002), 119–41; Peter Michael Ackroyd, "The Unwelcome Bridle: Peter Martyr Vermigli, the Doctrine of the Church, and the English Reformation" (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2002); W. Bradford Littlejohn, "More Than a Swineherd: Hooker, Vermigli, and an Aristotelian Defence of the Royal Supremacy," *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 15, no. 1 (2013): 68–83.

²⁰ W. J. Torrance Kirby, "The Charge of Religion Belongeth unto Princes: Peter Martyr Vermigli and the Unity of Civil and Ecclesiastical Jurisdiction," *Archiv Für Reformationsgeschichte*, no. 94 (2003): 131–45; W. J. Torrance Kirby, "Vermigli and Pope Boniface VIII: The Difference between Civil and Ecclesiastical Power," in *Peter Martyr Vermigli and the European Reformations: Semper Reformanda*, ed. Frank A. James (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 291–304; Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology*, chapter 2.

2) Authority in Vermigli's Ideal Commonwealth I: The Magistrate

One of the crucial cornerstones of Vermigli's ideal commonwealth is what he calls the magistrate. To whom does he refer? Is he a royalist, for whom 'the magistrate' is equivalent to 'the king', or should he rather be considered a republican? Robert Kingdon tended to believe the former, noting the affinities of Vermigli's thought to a "monarchical government."²¹ Giulio Bravi, by contrast, emphasised that Vermigli saw the time of the judges – whose government Vermigli called republican – as the golden period of the history of Israel.²² Ultimately, however, as Gary Jenkins has rightly noted, it is idle to play off Vermigli's 'monarchical' against his 'republican' insights, as he does not see them as mutually exclusive.²³ Put differently, whatever Vermigli holds about the office of the magistrate is applicable to a range of different forms of government. His definition of a magistrate is simply of a person chosen and instituted of God, who defends the laws by repressing evildoers and who supports honest people.²⁴ This person might equally be a king or another representative of the people.

As we shall see, three elements characterise Vermigli's view of the magistrate: first, the magistrate is divinely instituted, which in turn means that he mediates God's power. Secondly, the ideal magistrate, for Vermigli, is to his or her subjects what a father or a mother is to their family: a caring role-model. However, even when magistrates fall short of this ideal, Vermigli still maintains that they are instituted by God. The third characteristic of magistrates is that they are the keystone in Vermigli's (Aristotelian) political architecture, binding the whole commonwealth together, thereby ensuring its

²¹ Kingdon, *Political Thought*, iv.

²² Bravi, "Über die intellektuellen Wurzeln des Republikanismus von Peter Martyr Vermigli," 120–21.

²³ Jenkins, "Citizen Vermigli: The Political Animal in Vermigli's Commonwealth," 87. For a similar but much broader argument, see Patrick Collinson, *The Monarchical Republic of Queen Elizabeth I* (Manchester: John Rylands University Library of Manchester, 1987).

²⁴ Vermigli's two definitions of "magistrate," from the Romans commentary and the *De Magistratu scholium* (Judges commentary) respectively, are the following: "The magistrate is a person elected, and that of God, to defend the laws and peace, to repress vices and evils with punishments and the sword, and to advance virtues in every possible way." / "Est ergo magistratus persona electa, idque a Deo, ut leges et pacem tueatur, et vitia atque mala poenis et gladio reprimat et virtutes omnibus modis promoveat." (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 603; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 1.) A Magistrate is "a person chosen by the institution of God, to keep the laws regarding outward discipline through punishing transgressors with bodily punishments, and to defend and cherish good people." / "Persona divino instituto delecta, ut quo ad externam disciplinam leges custodiat, poena corporis transgressores plectendo et bonos foveat atque amplectatur." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 183r; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 26.)

stability and peace. It will, moreover, become evident that this has significant implications for the way in which Vermigli frames the relationship between the Church and the magistrate.

A short passage from Vermigli's *preces* on Psalm 82 illustrates the quasi-divinity that is attached, for Vermigli, to the magistrates' office. Vermigli asks God to "be willing to direct" the meetings of magistrates with his justice, "as you have deigned to honour [them] with the name and title of gods."²⁵ That God honours magistrates with "the title of gods" stands for Vermigli's strongly held conviction that God is the author and institutor of magistrates. How can human beings know this for sure? For two reasons, according to Vermigli: first, it is a natural insight, which God planted in human beings from their creation, that there cannot be any society without a ruler.²⁶ Secondly, this was confirmed by the Scriptures. As Bradford Littlejohn points out, the order of this argument is remarkable: Vermigli first appeals to the principle of natural law, which is then, secondarily, confirmed by the scriptures.²⁷ His central thesis rests on natural law. He teaches that

it is impossible that peace should be kept if all are equal, for contentions and discord arise from this. Therefore some must be above others, so they resolve quarrels, and to bring matters of controversy to a consensus. God granted this to bees, cranes, and fishes, for these living creatures have their kings and princes ... Therefore, given that human beings are the most excellent of all living creatures and communicate through the greatest amount of actions, it was even more necessary that they should be strengthened by God through the help of such leadership.²⁸

²⁵ "Quique superiores potestates ac magistratus deorum nomine ac titulo dignatus es insignire, in eorum senatu velis praesidere tua iustitia." (Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Preces sacrae ex Psalmis Davidis desumptae* (Zurich: Froschauer, 1564), 89r; Pietro Martire Vermigli, *Sacred Prayers Drawn from the Psalms of David*, trans. John Patrick Donnelly, Peter Martyr Library 3 (Kirkville, MO: Sixteenth Century Journal Publishers, 1996), 79.)

²⁶ "But if you ask when these powers first began, or when they were first ordained of God, I answer that the light which God had grafted in our minds, showed human beings from the beginning the manner of being ruled. Afterwards, this was confirmed by numerous words of God." / "At si quaeras quo tempore huiusmodi potestates primum coeperint aut quando primum a Deo fuerint ordinate, respondeo, lumen illud, quod Deus mentibus nostris indidit, iam inde ab initio hominibus rationem dominandi indicasse. Eam autem postea variis Dei oraculis fuisse confirmatam." (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 604; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 3.)

²⁷ Littlejohn, "More Than a Swineherd: Hooker, Vermigli, and an Aristotelian Defence of the Royal Supremacy," 79–80.

²⁸ "Nam in aequalitate fieri non potest ut pax colatur. Ex ea enim pugnae potius et dissidia oriuntur. Quare aliquos oportet caeteris eminere, qui lites dirimant et res controversas ad consensum adducant. Hoc Deus apibus, gruibus, piscibus non negavit. Haec enim animatia habent suos reges et principes ... Quare quum

Moreover, the same is “constantly” affirmed by the Scriptures. The Scriptures teach, says Vermigli, that God is “the author of all public power,” and that it is he who “distributes kingdoms and principalities, when and to whom he wills.”²⁹ These arguments are all from the Romans commentary; however, they are mirrored almost one-to-one in his Magistrate-*scholium* in the Judges commentary. There, he concludes in no uncertain terms that “God is the true and proper cause of Magistrates.”³⁰

However, Vermigli goes further than asserting that magistrates are divinely instituted. Commenting on Romans 13:4, he writes that the magistrate governs as God’s “vicar on the earth.”³¹ Indeed, “the Prince is appointed to take God’s place and to be between God and human beings.”³² These quotations are extraordinary in that the same terms that Vermigli uses to describe a magistrate could have been used – pre-Reformation – to characterise the office of a priest; the magistrate represents God to humanity, and as such stands between God and human beings. It is hard to overestimate just how *mediatory* Vermigli envisages the magistrate to be. The magistrate stands between God and human beings, precisely because he mediates God’s power and authority to them. There is a sense of a hierarchical chain of authority here: God gives power to the magistrate, whose authority in turn participates in Divine authority.

Indeed, Vermigli maintains that all who hold power participate in God’s power; hence they ought to be respected: “all power is of God. And if all power is of God, then we doubtlessly ought to honour and revere it.”³³ This remains true even if persons in power are corrupt. For even then, magistrates participate in God’s authority. This leads Vermigli to affirm, in a brief discussion of Aristotle’s typology of governments, that God is the author even of tyranny, oligarchy and democracy (the degenerated versions of monarchy, aristocracy and polity). “For there is in them a power and strength to rule and

homo sit omnium animatum praestantissimus et plurimis actionibus communicet, multo magis a Deo muniendus erat isto praesidio principatus.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 604; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 4.)

²⁹ “Scripturae etiam sanctae idem constanter affirmant. Illae enim docent non solum Deum esse autorem omnis publicae potestatis, verum etiam illum regna et principatus distribuere quando et quibus velit pro arbitrio suo.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 604; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 4.)

³⁰ “Deum esse veram ac propriam causam Magistratum.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 183v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 28.)

³¹ “Illius in terris vicem gerit.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 609; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 12.)

³² “Constituitur princeps, qui inter Deum et homines Dei vices gerat.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 609; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 12.)

³³ “Omnis potestas est a Deo. Quod si omnis potestas est a Deo, illam haud dubie debemus colere et venerari.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 607; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 8.)

to restrain human beings, which it could have, if it was not from God.”³⁴ This is to say that every government, even when it is corrupt, is sustained by God’s power. Whatever power it possesses, it has it in and through God.

No government could possibly exist, or have any authority, if it were not through participating in God’s supreme authority: this portrays *in nuce* the first characteristic of the magistrate in Vermigli’s ideal commonwealth. The magistrate is instituted by God who gives him power and authority. Moreover, this also manifests the first of the two structures of authority in Vermigli’s commonwealth which are the focus of this chapter. This structure is one in which authority is hierarchically mediated, and where God’s power is shared by participation.

The second characteristic of the magistrate in Vermigli’s ideal political universe is that the person in power is virtuous and guides his or her subjects to live equally virtuously. A magistrate is nothing else than a father (or mother) of a country, Vermigli holds.³⁵ Indeed, they “owe their subjects a fatherly love.”³⁶ That the ideal magistrate is to his or her country what a father or a mother is to their family means that, for Vermigli, on the one hand, they should function as role models. They ought to be “far better and more excellent than those whom they govern.”³⁷ On the other hand, the fatherly or motherly role also entails that magistrates encourage their subjects to live a virtuous life. Vermigli firmly believes that magistrates can engender civil virtues in the minds of their people. This is within their power, because they can “drive their subjects unto actions” “by laws and edicts.” Because “virtue arises from repeated actions,” moreover, the magistrates’ laws can effectively “drive” their subjects “towards virtues.”³⁸ Indeed, Vermigli states that many “good and innocent men” desire to lead an upright life, yet they “of themselves cannot keep any discipline.” For this reason, they need good laws to direct them to what

³⁴ “Et quamvis tres istae species vehementer corruptae et vitiosae sint, Deus tamen etiam illarum est autor. Vis enim et potestas in illis est regendi, et coercendi homines, quae certe non posset ullo modo extare nisi a Deo.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 604; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 3.)

³⁵ “Neque enim aliud est magistratus quam pater patriae.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 603; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 2.)

³⁶ “Quare principes debent subditis paternam dilectionem.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 183v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 27.)

³⁷ “Debeant illis quibus praesunt longe meliores et praestantiores esse.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 183v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 28.)

³⁸ This is taken from a reflection in the Samuel commentary, at the end of 1 Samuel 8: “Nam virtus nascitur ex frequentibus actionibus. Quare cum principes legibus et edictis adigant suos ad actiones adigunt etiam eos ad virtutes.” (Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 49v.).

they desire, which makes the magistrate like a teacher to them.³⁹ The duty of this teacher is “to punish wicked works, and to advance good ones.”⁴⁰ In short: good magistrates promote a virtuous life, both through their own example, and by punishing those who do not live virtuously.⁴¹ Given, moreover, that piety is the most excellent of all virtues, magistrates ought to refer all things to the exercise of piety.⁴² We will see below how this affects Vermigli’s understanding of the relationship between the government and the church.

Even when magistrates fall short of this virtuous and pious ideal, however, Vermigli still holds that they are instituted and sustained by God. Even non-ideal magistrates form part of the hierarchical ‘chain of authority’ we saw above. Put differently: of the two characteristics of Vermigli’s magistrate that we have described so far, the first outdoes the second. “Not only good and just princes reign by the will of the Lord,” Vermigli holds, “but also ungodly and wicked tyrants.”⁴³ This is the case since God may “use bad and ungodly princes to punish the wicked acts of the people.”⁴⁴ Remarks like these, incidentally, were what vexed Quentin Skinner. Contrary to what Skinner believed, however, Vermigli wrote all of the above in his *Romans* commentary.

The third characteristic of Vermigli’s ideal magistrate is that he or she is the guarantor of the unity and peace of the commonwealth. This is again, in some ways, a function of the first characteristic I have described above, since Vermigli is convinced that whatever is appointed by God will be “constant and stable.”⁴⁵ The constancy and stability of a commonwealth is paramount for Vermigli. What worse can happen to a society, he

³⁹ “Saepe enim videas viro probos et innocentes, quamvis mente ac voluntate bona sint, cupiantque vitam recte instituere, tamen rationem civilis discipline per se ipsos non tenere. Opus ergo illis est ut ad id quod cupiunt bonis et piis legibus dirigantur. Quare potestas civilis illis pro paedagogo esse potest.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 607; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 10.)

⁴⁰ “...ut opera mala puniat et bona promoveat.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 608; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 10.)

⁴¹ Cf. “Good princes make virtues easy, in that they both urge them by example and impel human beings unto them by fear and punishments.” / “Principes bonos efficere virtutes faciles, dum eas et exemplo urgant et poenis metuque homines ad eas impellant.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 609; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 12.)

⁴² Cf. “Since piety is the most excellent of all virtues, therefore Lord reigns when all things are referred to piety.” / “Cum pietas omnium virtutum sit praeclarissima, tum dominus regnat quando ad illam omnia referuntur.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 107v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 23.)

⁴³ “Quare Domini voluntate non tantum boni et iusti principes, verum etiam impii et scelerati tyranni regnant.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 605; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 5.)

⁴⁴ “...ut malis et impiis principibus utatur ad puniendam populi scelera.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 605; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 4–5.)

⁴⁵ “Si sunt a Deo constitutae sunt etiam constantes et stabiles.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 605; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 5.)

rhetorically asks in his *scholium* on “troubles and sedition,” than for its order and unity to be subverted?⁴⁶ This explains why he insists so strongly that clergy ought to pay taxes to the magistrates: by not paying taxes, priests fail to acknowledge the socially unifying function of the magistrate, and hence weaken the “support and sinews” of the commonwealth.⁴⁷

Indeed, Vermigli’s commonwealth admits of only one centre of authority: the magistrate. The magistrate binds all parts of society together in his very office. It is this conviction that leads Vermigli to refuse any suggestion that priests are not subject to the magistrate’s authority. This, he insists, would mean to “divide the commonwealth, which ought to be one body only, into two bodies.”⁴⁸ This division would be absurd, Vermigli holds, for it would suggest that

the Spanish clergy are not Spaniards; or the French clergy are not Frenchmen. Doubtless if all Spaniards are subject to their king, the clergy are so too. For insofar as they are Spaniards, they ought of necessity to be subject unto him.⁴⁹

The magistrate’s office therefore holds a crucial socially unifying function. In practice, this means that magistrates bear the responsibility for all of society. They oversee adherence to both tables of the law, as Vermigli puts it: “Even though the law is distributed into two tables, both are entrusted to the power of the Magistrate.”⁵⁰ The reference here is to the two stone tables on which the Ten Commandments were written. Vermigli insists that it is the magistrate’s duty to enforce both the ceremonial commandments of the first table, and the social commandments of the second table. For him, it is the magistrate’s duty to ensure that God is rightly worshipped, and that human beings exercise their responsibilities towards each other. In doing so, magistrates follow the good example of kings in the history of Israel, such as Josiah, David and Solomon.⁵¹ However, as above,

⁴⁶ “Quid peius multitudini potest accidere quam si ordo et unitas ei auferatur?” (Vermigli, *Melachim*, 146v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 95.)

⁴⁷ “...firmamenta et nervi...” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 189v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 48.)

⁴⁸ “An non vident se rem publica cuius unum corpus esse oportuit, in duo corpora dividere?” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 188v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 45.)

⁴⁹ “Quali clerici Hispani non sint Hispani, aut Galli clerici non sint Galli. Certe si omnes Hispani subiecti sunt regi suo, clericos quoque. Cum sint Hispani necesse est illi esse subiectos.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 608; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 7.)

⁵⁰ “Cum lex distributa sit in duas tabulas utraque commissa est potestati magistratus.” (This is from a comment in the commentary on 1 Samuel 28:3, Vermigli, *Samuelis*, 157r.)

⁵¹ Cf. *Ibid.*, 157v.

Vermigli's first argument for why the magistrate ought to be responsible for all parts of society is not scriptural, but Aristotelian. In a hierarchy of practical "arts," he holds, the art of government is the chief architectonic art. Therefore, the magistrate

ought to rule all parts of the commonwealth. He does so not by exercising all other arts, but by making sure that no-one corrupts and counterfeits them. If a physician cures not according to the prescript of Galen or Hippocrates, or if an apothecary sells bad and corrupt drugs, the Magistrate ought to correct them both. And if he may do this in other arts, I see no cause why he may not do it in religion.⁵²

All practical "arts" ought to be overseen by the magistrate who exercises the most important and unifying "art." Should anyone exercise their calling improperly – like a pharmacist selling contaminated medicine – the magistrate is to hold them accountable. This reasoning is then applied to religion as well: it is the magistrate's duty to make sure that his or her subjects worship God rightly, and that the Church's teaching is pure. Vermigli primarily had church leaders in mind who – in his estimation – had become unfaithful to their calling. They must be brought to account by the magistrate. For who, he asks rhetorically, will take a pastor away who had become a wolf, if not the magistrate? And who will punish bishops if they do not govern according the Word of God, if not the magistrate?⁵³ In short – as Vermigli puts it in his *scholium* on the Magistrate – "it belongs to the [duties of the] Magistrate to provide that the goods of the Church are not given to the enemies of godliness."⁵⁴

However, how is the magistrate to know whether someone has become an enemy of godliness? What standards are they to apply when they judge whether their subjects worship rightly, or that the clergy teach purely? These questions lead us to the second focal point of authority in Vermigli's ideal commonwealth: the word of God. The word of God is the measure against which the rightness and purity of worship and the Church's

⁵² "Quare cum prima et summa ars sit magistratus, imperare debet omnibus reipublicae partibus. Non exercet ipse quidem eas artes: sed videre tamen debet ne quis eas corrumpat aut adulteret. Si medicus non curet ad praescriptum Galeni aut Hypocratis, aut si pharmacopola merces suas corruptas et vitiatas vendat, magistratus debet utrumque coercere. Et si hoc potest in aliis artibus, non video cur idem in religione non possit." (Ibid.)

⁵³ "Quid enim si pastor efficiatur lupo, quis eum tollet, nisi magistratus?" (Ibid., 157r.)

⁵⁴ "Magistratus est providere ne opes Ecclesiae dentur hostibus pietatis." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 188r; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 44.)

teaching is to be judged, for Vermigli. As we shall see in the next section, however, this solution sounds more straightforward in theory than it proves in practice.

3) Authority in Vermigli's Ideal Commonwealth II: The Word of God

We have seen above how Vermigli appeals to Aristotle when claiming that politics (or, the government) is the chief architectonic art, unifying the commonwealth. In his Commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Vermigli makes a similar point. He stresses that the difference between ethics and politics is merely one of degree, because both have the same goal: ethics strives to make individuals live according to the principles of virtue, whereas politics has the same aim, but for the entirety of the commonwealth.⁵⁵ Only a few pages later, however, Vermigli qualifies this praise of politics by stating that the real architectonic science is in fact not politics, but the study of the Holy Scriptures. This ranks above politics, he asserts, since the Scriptures determine the latter through their instructions for how to order society. For example, the Scriptures approve of magistrates, they declare that there should be priests, bishops and doctors as well as mechanical skills.⁵⁶ This reshuffling of the top position in the hierarchy of authorities is characteristic of the tension between the authority of the magistrate and that of the Word of God in Vermigli's ideal commonwealth. Having studied the authority of the magistrate in the last section, I will now investigate the authority Vermigli ascribes to the Word of God as an agent for ordering society.

In the *De Magistratu scholium*, immediately after asserting that the magistrate is instituted by God, Vermigli makes it clear that the same is true for Christian ministers. Like magistrates, they "are keepers of the word of God and of his law, but not only regarding outward discipline."⁵⁷ As Vermigli spells out, magistrates only exercise "outward discipline

⁵⁵ "Quid enim tanquam finis queritur in ethicis, nisi ut quisque singillatim vivat ex virtute, quod idem studet politica facultas in republica, nimirum ut cives omnes ex virtute agant?" (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 96; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 45.)

⁵⁶ "Ubi primum illud occurrit, proprietatem illam principis facultatis vel ut ipse loquitur αρχιτεκτονικης facultati divinarum literarum debere assignari. ... Approbant enim magistratus, volunt esse pastores, episcopos, doctores, artificia quoque mechanica." (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 98; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, 47.)

⁵⁷ "Ministri Ecclesiarum, qui tamen verbi dei et legis eius custodes sunt, sed non tantum quo ad externam disciplinam." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 183r; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 26.)

and punishment” on transgressors of the law.⁵⁸ By contrast, ministers “reach even the most intimate motions of the mind,” when they bind the guilty and impenitent in the name of God, and, as part of this spiritual discipline, exclude them “from the kingdom of heaven, as long as they remain impenitent.”⁵⁹ It is the duty of the minister to

rebuke sinners, not with the sword, not through financial penalty, not by imprisonment, not by banishment, but after his own manner, that is, by the might and power of the word of God.⁶⁰

More generally, this means that each individual is under two kinds of authority: one political and one spiritual. Vermigli speaks of two kinds of subjections: a political subjection through which individuals are under the authority of the magistrate, and a spiritual subjection.⁶¹

Who or what effects such a spiritual subjection? Who holds the spiritual authority? Characteristically, Vermigli’s answer to this question does *not* involve the ministers of the Church. The spiritual subjection, in his understanding, is one through which the believer is directly subjected to the “Word of God.” This can be seen, for instance, when he discusses the mutual relationship of magistrates and priests. Distinguishing in either case between the office and the person who holds it, Vermigli claims that the civil magistrate,

insofar as he is a Christian, doubtless is subject to the word of God. And insofar as he exercises authority and governs, he also ought to be subject to the word of God. For he ought to get the rules for how to reign and govern out of this word.⁶²

Note that the magistrate is subject to the *word of God*, both in respect to his office and as a private person. The ministers of the Church are not involved in his spiritual subjection. This is significant insofar as the reversal is not symmetrical: of the ministers of the Church,

⁵⁸“Magistratus vero in transgressores disciplinam et poenam externam tantummodo exercet..” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 183v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 26.)

⁵⁹ “...ad intimos usque motus animorum pertingere. ... Minister sontes et impenitentes dei nomine ligat, et dei nomine a regno coelorum, dum sic manserint, excludit.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 183r-v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 26.)

⁶⁰ “Eius profecto est corripere peccantes, non quidem gladio, non pecuniaria mulcta, non carcere, non exilio, sed suo modo, hoc est, vi et potestate verbi dei.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185r; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 33.)

⁶¹ “Duae sunt subiectiones. Una politica et civilis ... altera subiectio est spiritualis.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 34.)

⁶² “Is quatenus homo est Christianus, proculdubio verbo dei subiicitur, et quatenus potestatem gerit atque administrat eidem verbo dei subesse debet. Nam inde petat oportet regendi atque administrandi regulas.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 186r-v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 37.)

Vermigli does *not* say that they are subject to the word of God. Rather, ministers are subject to the magistrate – at least insofar as they are considered as private persons: “With regard to his person, the minister is subject to the civil power.”⁶³ I will return to this fascinating asymmetry in the next section, focussing more closely on why it is difficult to hold that the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities, for Vermigli, are mutually subjected to each other. For now, however, I would like to highlight that when Vermigli states that everyone is under a double authority – one spiritual and one political – the spiritual authority is exercised not by the ministers of the Church, but by the word of God.

However, what does Vermigli mean by the word of God? Does he refer to Christ as the eternal Logos, or to the Scriptures, or both? The following quotation, taken from the section of the *De Magistratu scholium* that deals with political versus spiritual subjection, makes it clear that the “word of God” denotes a set of directions over what to do or not to do:

For immediately as soon as human beings hear about their duty out of the word of God – that either this thing or that is to be done, or this or that to be avoided – they submit, believe and obey, because they perceive that it is the word of God which is spoken.⁶⁴

This quotation suggests that the “word of God” is one that is spoken and heard, and one which is characterised by being a kind of law. This suggests that, for Vermigli, the “word of God” is at least very nearly coterminous with Scripture, especially its commandments. Moreover, as seen in the above quotation, the word of God inspires such awe in those who hear it, that they cannot but follow the guidance it gives, and acknowledge its authority. This immediacy or non-mediation is highly significant for our purposes. Why?

Both subjections, spiritual and political, are ultimately subjections to God. Both kinds of authority are grounded in God’s power. In the case of the political authority, we have seen how God’s power is mediated in the person of the magistrate. The word of God is therefore the functional equivalent of the magistrate in that they both mediate God’s power. The crucial difference between these two channels of God’s power, however, is

⁶³ “Quod ad personam attinet, civili potestati minister subiicitur.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 186v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 37.)

⁶⁴ “Statim enim, ubi audiunt homines de officio suo ex verbo dei, et hoc vel illud faciendum esse, illud autem vel illud evitandum, cedunt, credunt, et obtemperant. Quia quod dicitur esse verbum dei sentiunt.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 34.)

that the first relies on institutional mediation. There is, as we have seen, a ‘chain of power.’ This means that the way through which ordinary subjects access or even perceive God’s power in this context is through the magistrate – and only through him. The mediatory chain cannot be circumvented.

This, however, is radically different in the case of the power of the Word of God. The latter does not need any institutional mediation. To be sure, it is the ministers’ duty to make this Word known, but theirs is a disseminating role, not a mediatory one. This means that the full power of God in his Word can be accessed or experienced outside of the institution of the Church. This is precisely what the above quotation expresses. For it does not matter *how* human beings hear what their duty is from the word of God; they are compelled to submit to it straightaway, as soon as they hear it. There is a double immediacy to the word of God, for Vermigli: its authority works instantaneously, and it does not need to be mediated.

That God’s authority needs no institutional channelling in the case of the spiritual subjection can moreover be seen from the fact that magistrates – as everyone else – can have direct and unmediated access to it. We have seen above how Vermigli, in his commentary on the Nicomachean Ethics, contested Aristotle’s claim that politics is the ultimate architectonic science by asserting that the Scriptures are still above it. Directly after this, Vermigli writes: “The fact that we attribute the supreme faculty to the wisdom contained in holy scripture should not make anyone think that anything is taken or detracted from the political administration.” This is because magistrates themselves will find the “rules and principles of their own faculty” or role in the Scriptures. How? They can read the Scriptures for themselves and gain from their reading whatever knowledge they need to fulfil their role. That a minister opens the Scriptures to them, or that it needs to be read in the community of the Church, is merely optional:

They [i.e. the magistrates] may acquire such knowledge by either searching the sacred scriptures themselves for what God prescribed as the duty of monarchs, or by getting instruction from the ministers of the church.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ “Poterunt autem notitiam huiusmodi sibi comparare, vel sacras literas per seipsos sedulo evolvendo, quod praecepit Deus regibus ut facerent, vel poterunt per ecclesiae ministros instrui.” (Vermigli, *Kommentar zur Nikomachischen Ethik*, 100; Vermigli, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics*, 48.)

What we have seen so far is a different approach to the way in which God's power is channelled in political matters and in the spiritual realm. While the Magistrate hierarchically mediates God's political authority in ways that cannot be eschewed, Vermigli practically dispenses with mediation in the spiritual realm. Despite these differences, however, there are some remarkable similarities in Vermigli's ideal commonwealth between the position held by the word of God and the position of the magistrate.

We have seen that, for Vermigli, the magistrate is the guarantor of unity. In some ways, the same could be said of the word of God. It too has a unifying function because its claim is universal. It is, as Vermigli writes, "a common rule, through which all things ought to be directed and controlled." He moreover holds that the word of God "shows how all things ought to be done by everyone."⁶⁶ Because it is the rule of *all* things and *all* people, the word of God has a unifying function, binding all parts of society together under its authority. Indeed, "there is nothing in the whole world that the word of God does not cover."⁶⁷ This universal claim is comparable to the role Vermigli ascribes to the magistrate. There is a functional equivalence of the magistrate and the word of God in Vermigli's ideal commonwealth: both their claims to authority are universal, and both unify through their very claims all parts of society.

Given these functional or architectural similarities between the authority of the magistrate and the word of God, it comes as no surprise that their respective claims to authority clash with one another. Both the claim of the magistrate and of the word of God are universal. Much of the *De Magistratu scholium* is an attempt to resolve these tensions; although, I venture, with limited success.

4) Conflicting Authorities and Vermigli's *Scholium* on the Magistrate

The conflicting authoritative claims of the word of God and the magistrate manifest themselves in the *De Magistratu* through Vermigli's working out of the relationship between the civil and the ecclesiastical powers. The relative position of these two powers

⁶⁶ "Verbum autem dei communis est regula, qua omnia et dirigi et temperari oportet ... In universum etiam demonstrat quemadmodum omnia ab omnibus gerenda sint." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185r; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 33.)

⁶⁷ "Nihil est in toto mundo, ad quod verbum dei se non extendat." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185r; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 33.)

cannot be negotiated without the word of God as the all-determining third. In what follows, I will outline two of Vermigli's main attempts to relate civil and ecclesiastical powers. Both express the tension between the conflicting claims to authority of the magistrate and the word of God.

The first way in which Vermigli proposes to clarify the relationship between the magistrate and the spiritual powers is by means of a distinction between the office and its incumbent (which we have already encountered). As we have seen, Vermigli holds that the civil magistrate is subject to the word of God both as a private person and in his office. What about the clergy?

With regard to his person, the minister is subject to the civil power. For he is a citizen, he pays tax like others and he is held to account for his behaviour. But as concerning his ministry, he is also in some way subject to the magistrate. For if he teaches or administers the sacraments against the word of God, he will be punished by the civil magistrate. And yet he must not ask the magistrate for the rules and methods of his function, but the word of God.⁶⁸

According to Vermigli, ministers of the Church are therefore straightforwardly under the authority of the magistrate as private persons. However, because magistrates perform a unifying function, bearing responsibility for all of society, ministers are under the jurisdiction of the magistrates also as holders of their office, even though less straightforwardly so (in "some way"). The two examples in which magistrates ought to exercise their jurisdiction over ministers *as ministers* relate to two of Vermigli's three marks of the church: purity of teaching and the lawful use of the sacraments.⁶⁹ If ministers do not fulfil their ministry in accordance with these marks, thereby essentially making their church into something less than a church, the magistrate ought to intervene.

Indeed, in Vermigli's view, the magistrate "ought to take care that bishops, pastors, and teachers in the Church teach purely, exhort fatherly, and administer the

⁶⁸ "Quod ad personam attinet, civili potestati minister subiicitur. Nam et civis est, et quemadmodum alii tributum solvit, et morum censuram subit. Sed quod attinet ad ministerium, aliquo etiam modo subiicitur magistratui. Quia si contra verbum dei aut doceat, aut administret sacramenta, coercebitur a civili magistratu. Nec tamen ab eo, sed a verbo dei regulas et rationes petet suae functionis." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 186v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 37.)

⁶⁹ The third mark is Church discipline. On Vermigli's doctrine of the marks of the Church, see Ackroyd, "The Unwelcome Bridle," 52–57; Kingdon, "Peter Martyr Vermigli and the Marks of the True Church."

sacraments according to the word of God.⁷⁰ This essentially makes the magistrate into a custodian of the word of God and its absolute claim to authority.

This view presupposes that it is evident to magistrates what it means to teach or administer the sacraments according to the word of God. But there is a problematic impasse: how would magistrates acquire such knowledge? Of course, Vermigli's answer would be that they could either read the Scriptures themselves, or be advised on them by the ministers, as seen above. Quite apart from the fact that it is unlikely that ministers would tell their magistrates that they themselves are teaching against the word of God, the crucial question is not so much one of pedagogy, but one of hermeneutics. There may be more than one way of celebrating the sacraments or of teaching the gospel, each of which can lay claim to be based on the word of God. Vermigli's theory does not seem to factor in such interpretative disagreement as to what the word of God teaches.

Vermigli's bypassing of hermeneutics is a corollary of the fact that, in his view, the word of God needs no mediation. If the word of God is so immediately transparent that it needs no tradition in which to be moored, and no community to embody it, then there should be no need for hermeneutics – even though this already constitutes a hermeneutical decision. However, looking more closely at Vermigli's position on this point, we might wonder: If the word of God really were evidently clear, why should the magistrate need to control its teaching at all? Should it not be self-evident to the ministers of the Church? Vermigli believes that it is possible for ministers to fail to have immediate insight into the word of God – human beings are fallen and sinful, after all. He also believes that magistrates are in a position to realise instances of this failure, presumably through their own immediate insight into the word of God. Given both the possibility of the ministers' failure, and the word-of-God-competence of the magistrates, however, why should ministers *not* look to the magistrate for "rules and reasons" of their own function? Indeed, in the above quotation, the conflicting claims to authority of the magistrate, on the one hand, and the word of God, on the other hand, can be located most precisely in the "and yet" of the last sentence: The magistrate's responsibility spans all of society, including religion. Specifically, he ought to be the custodian of the integrity of the word

⁷⁰ "Curabit enim ut episcopi, pastores, et doctores in ecclesia pure doceant, paterne reprehendant et ex verbo dei administrent sacramenta." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185r-v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 33.)

of God. *And yet*, this custodian is not supposed to mediate the word of God, as its formidable authority is beyond even the need for mediation.

The second way in which Vermigli seeks to specify the relationship between the magistrate and the spiritual powers is by means of the distinction between two kinds of subjections (which we have also already encountered above). The argument Vermigli is pursuing is the following: Ministers are subject to the magistrate by a *political* subjection whereas the magistrate is subject to the ministers by a *spiritual* subjection. However, he never quite makes this argument explicit. He indeed strongly holds the first half of it: "There is no doubt that ministers are subject to the magistrate insofar as they are human beings and citizens, together with their lands, wealth, and possessions."⁷¹ And yet he never actually says that the magistrate is spiritually accountable to ministers of the Church. Rather, he is accountable to the word of God.⁷²

The reason Vermigli never makes this argument explicit again lies in the conflicting claims of authority of the magistrate and word of God. The all-encompassing claim of the magistrate demands a political subjection of everyone, and precludes the possibility of the magistrate being subject – even 'only' spiritually subject – to anyone. This is why Vermigli cannot ultimately say that the magistrate is subject to ministers of the Church. Conversely, the rationale to which Vermigli appeals, when he draws the distinction between political and spiritual subjection, is that by which the absolute authority of the word of God might be guaranteed. There must not be any situation where magistrates could restrict the authority of the word of God:

The ecclesiastical power is subject to the magistrate not by a spiritual, but by a political subjection. For it is not subject to it with regard to the sacraments and preaching, because the magistrate cannot not alter the word of God or the sacraments which the minister uses. Neither can the magistrate compel pastors and teachers of the church to teach differently, or to administer the sacraments in another way than is prescribed by the word of God.⁷³

⁷¹ "Ministri tamen quatenus homines sunt et cives, una cum agris, opibus et possessionibus suis absque ulla dubitatione magistratui subiiciuntur." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 35.)

⁷² E.g. "The civil power ought to be subject to the word of God, which is preached by the ministers." / "Civilis itaque potestas at verbo dei quod a ministris praedicatur subiici debet." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 35.)

⁷³ "Subiicitur ecclesiastica potestas magistratui non spiritali subiectione, sed politica. Nam quod ad sacramenta et conciones attinet, non ei subiicitur, quia magistratus verbum dei et sacramenta, quibus

The conflicting authorities of the magistrate and the word of God lead Vermigli to a position that is at least paradoxical, if not self-contradictory, concerning the relationship of ministers and magistrates. On the one hand, a minister of the Church is *not* subject to the magistrate in spiritual matters. But on the other hand, this very magistrate ought to compel the ministers if they teach against the word of God.⁷⁴ How is it possible that magistrates exercise such a jurisdiction over the ministers of the Church, without subjecting them spiritually?

Granted, the magistrate is only entitled to enforce the word of God negatively, as it were. Without making it explicit, Vermigli effectively draws a distinction between a positive, ‘creative’ spiritual authority of the magistrate, which he forbids, and a negative, ‘conservative’ spiritual jurisdiction, which he affords to the magistrate. This distinction makes some sense. However, it still relies on the same problematic premise we observed above: The meaning of the word of God has to be abundantly clear, and immediately evident to the magistrate. For if this were not the case, how could magistrates be able to discern when they needed to compel clergy to adhere to the word of God?

Both Vermigli’s attempts to resolve the tension between the conflicting authority of the word of God and of the magistrate, which we have seen so far, presuppose that the magistrate clearly and unambiguously understands the word of God. Moreover, both take it for granted that the magistrates and the ministers of the church (or indeed anyone) essentially agree on this understanding. The way in which Vermigli works out the relationship between the civil and the ecclesiastical powers does not allow for the possibility of disagreement or degrees of interpretation. If his ideal commonwealth is to work, there must never be a situation in which magistrates and ministers disagree over what the “right” understanding of the word of God is. That Vermigli does not consider the possibility of such disagreement over the word of God seems curious. After all, Vermigli lived all his life in societies where there was great and public disagreement over the right

ministerium utitur, non potest inflectere, neque cogere pastores aut doctores ecclesiae ut aliter doceant, vel secus administrent sacramenta quam a verbo dei praescriptum fuerit.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 35.)

⁷⁴ As we have already seen, Vermigli repeatedly and in no uncertain terms maintains that if ministers do not teach “right” or fail to administer the sacraments in an “orderly” manner, then “it is the office of the Magistrate to compel them to an order,” making sure they “mingle not fables” nor “abuse” the Sacraments. Cf. “Quia si non recte doceant, nec ex ordine administrent sacramenta, magistratus est eos in ordinem cogere, ac videre ne impure doceant, ne fabulas admisceant, ne sacramentis abutantur.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185v–186r; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 35.)

understanding of the word of God, including disagreement between magistrates and religious entities.

Vermigli's attempt to resolve the tension between the conflicting claims to authority of the magistrate and the word of God seems therefore not ultimately successful. The fundamental reason for this lies in his refusal to attend to hermeneutical questions. Such questions about how to understand the word of God should have been of paramount importance to him because the word of God is an all-determining factor in his ideal political commonwealth. Denying the existence of hermeneutical difficulties or ambiguities in the understanding of the word of God leads to passing over a host of power-related questions implied in the "right" understanding of the word of God: Who has the authority to decide what is the "right" way of understanding the word of God? Is there anyone, or any community who are its privileged interpreters? It seems that a vision of a commonwealth ruled by the word of God ought to have considered such issues of interpretative authority.

Moreover, the question of authority is pertinent to Vermigli's own practice of interpretation. As a professor teaching the Scriptures at leading Protestant schools and universities, Vermigli's own interpretation of the word of God was a highly powerful one. Many of his contemporary readers took his interpretation of the word of God as the 'right' interpretation. Effectively, Vermigli therefore takes the position of a privileged interpreter in his Scriptural commentaries. Moreover, the sheer fact that he self-consciously writes to defend one interpretation of the word of God over against a host of other possible interpretations performatively clashes with his own premise that the word of God needs no mediation. Vermigli implicitly is a mediator of the word of God, something which in his own framework should theoretically be redundant.

However, is there an alternative way of understanding Vermigli's political theology, and specifically the way in which he related the word of God to the political and ecclesiastical powers? Torrance Kirby offers a different, and more charitable reading. Among the commentators on Vermigli's political theology, Kirby and Peter Ackroyd are unique in their explicit engagement with the workings of authority in Vermigli's political

thought. However, because Ackroyd's focus is not primarily Vermigli's political theology,⁷⁵ I will focus in the next section on Torrance Kirby's engagement with Vermigli's political theology.

5) Torrance Kirby's Reading of Vermigli's *Scholium* on the Magistrate

Torrance Kirby, in his book *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology*, argues that there was a kind of 'Zurich school', primarily represented by Heinrich Bullinger and Peter Martyr Vermigli, whose thought provided the basis for "a continuous and coherent tradition of political theology in England throughout the latter half of the sixteenth century."⁷⁶ Kirby maintains that Bullinger and Vermigli "were no less than chief architects of the reformation of the Church of England."⁷⁷ He makes this argument through five "close and sympathetic" readings of texts by the Zurich theologians, one of them being Vermigli's *De Magistratu scholium*.⁷⁸ Kirby concludes that "Peter Martyr Vermigli constructs a sophisticated theological analysis of the 'hypostatic' union of civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the person of the godly Prince."⁷⁹ In particular, Vermigli's assertion of the "due subordination of all subjects, in all matters civil and ecclesiastical, to the supreme magistrate" became, in Kirby's estimation, "a key stabilising principle of early-modern, secular political life in general and of the Tudor state in particular."⁸⁰ In this section, I shall outline and discuss Kirby's reading of Vermigli's political theology.

In short, Kirby praises Vermigli's thought for simultaneously adhering (1) to an Aristotelian conception of the unifying, architectonic function of the magistrate, which includes a Pseudo-Dionysian hierarchical logic of mediation, and (2) to an allegedly

⁷⁵ Ackroyd's work – a doctoral thesis – primarily argues that Church discipline was a mark of the Church for the Reformers and especially for Vermigli, and that the contemporary Church would be well-advised to rediscover this dimension of being-Church. However, in his discussion of Vermigli's ecclesiology, he is critical of the way Vermigli negotiates the relationship between civil and ecclesiastical power, showing that for Vermigli, the Church is effectively made Church – in a jurisdictional way – only through the civil government: The church "cannot exist in the world without an order which is guaranteed by the temporal sword." (Ackroyd, "The Unwelcome Bridle," 81; 264-265, here 265.) Ackroyd is sceptical of this conclusion because insofar as she cannot exist in the world without the order established by the civil power, the "church ... depends on the magistrate, but the reverse is not the case." (Ibid., 265.)

⁷⁶ Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology*, 4.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 5.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 11. Versions of the same article were published as Kirby, "The Charge of Religion Belongeth unto Princes"; Kirby, "Vermigli and Pope Boniface VIII."

⁷⁹ Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology*, 22.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 73.

Augustinian understanding of the clear distinction between the realms of externally coercive and internally spiritual power. Vermigli accomplishes this simultaneity, according to Kirby, by adapting the hierarchical logic of Boniface VIII's bull *Unam Sanctam* in two ways. First, it is now the magistrate who holds plenitude of power which, for Boniface VIII, was held by the pope, and secondly, the magistrate's sphere of power is limited to political and external power only. He cannot mediate grace.

In more detail, Kirby's argument runs as follows. Vermigli's extensive engagement with Pope Boniface's VIII's bull *Unam Sanctam*⁸¹ manifests, in Kirby's estimation, a tension between two kinds of Christian Platonism: Augustinian and Pseudo-Dionysian. He characterises them as follows:

At the Augustinian pole, emphasis is placed upon the utter incommensurability between the orders of grace and nature. ... By contrast, at the pole of Pseudo-Dionysian spirituality, the orders of grace and nature constitute a continuous, ascending hierarchy wherein the soul's approach to God is accomplished by a graduated process of mediation.⁸²

Within the framework of this distinction, Kirby places Vermigli clearly at the Augustinian pole. He states that for Vermigli, "the first principle of order does not consist primarily in a gradual, hierarchical mediation but rather in a simple, binary distinction between two principal species of subjection, namely the political/external and the spiritual/internal."⁸³ By contrast, hierarchical mediation is characteristic of the bull *Unam Sanctam*, which appeals to Pseudo-Dionysius' "political ontology."⁸⁴ Such a "cosmic vision", Kirby holds, is "deeply" though "not totally" at odds "with the Augustinian assumptions underpinning Vermigli's own thought."⁸⁵ The fact that Vermigli is "not totally" at odds with a Pseudo-Dionysian understanding of politics is due to his insistence that the magistrate is a mediator of divinely ordained governance. In this context, he operates within a hierarchical logic.

However, how does Vermigli square this "Pseudo-Dionysian" element of his thought, (viz. the magistrate's all-encompassing jurisdiction), with the "Augustinian" distinction between nature and grace, or political and spiritual matters? It is in this context

⁸¹ Especially in the *De Magistratu scholium*. Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 184v–185r; 186v–189r.

⁸² Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology*, 66.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 65.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 66.

that Kirby is most acutely aware of the tensions present in Vermigli's thought. On the one hand, he writes, it might appear that "Vermigli's Augustinian insistence upon the incommensurability of the 'two subjections' has led him ... into a Manichean dualism," where there are two independent realms, one entirely worldly, and the other entirely spiritual. On the other hand, however, "Vermigli's ascription of ecclesiastical supremacy to the magistrate appears to conflate the civil and ecclesiastical powers and thus to raise the contrary logical difficulty."⁸⁶

How does Vermigli escape these difficulties? According to Kirby, Vermigli "both complicates and clarifies the question by arguing for a mutual subjection of civil and spiritual jurisdiction."⁸⁷ To support this interpretation of the *De Magistratu scholium*, Kirby quotes the following lines penned by Vermigli:

The civil power must be subject to the word of God, which is preached by the ministers. In turn, the ecclesiastical power is subject to the civil power when the ministers conduct themselves badly in personal or ecclesiastical matters.⁸⁸

If by "spiritual jurisdiction" Kirby means the Church or the "*ecclesiastica potestas*," then his reading of this passage seems problematic. For the political authorities are asked to bow *not* to the ecclesiastical authorities, but rather to *the word of God*. The ministers may preach this word, but the magistrates could encounter and understand the word of God also through other channels – such as their own reading of the Bible. As we have seen above, ministers are not strictly necessary to channel or communicate the word of God, as it can communicate itself. This means that there is no straightforward mutuality of subjection between ministers and magistrates – even if it is fair to say that Vermigli intended for the church and the magistrates to work hand in hand.⁸⁹ However, leaving

⁸⁶ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 70.

⁸⁸ "Civilis itaque potestas verbo dei quod a ministris predicatur subiici debet. At vicissim ecclesiastica potestas civili subiicitur, cum ministri vel in rebus humanis, vel in ecclesiasticis male se gesserint." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 35.)

⁸⁹ He writes, for instance that "both of them help another: for the political prince gives judgement, and the ecclesiastical power, though it does not itself give judgement, it teaches how judgement ought to be given." / "Utraeque tamen se mutuo iuvant. Nam princeps politicus ius dicit, ecclesiasticus vero non ille quidem ius dicit, sed tamen docet quemadmodum ius dici debeat." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 186r; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 37.) See also: "For these powers are somewhat interchangeable, and are occupied with the same things in different ways, and mutually help one another." / "Sunt enim hae potestates quodammodo ἀντιστροφᾶς, ac variis modis circa eadem versantur, ac sese mutuo iuvant." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 35.)

aside that the notion of “mutual subjection” of civil and ecclesiastical powers is difficult to maintain on the basis of Vermigli’s work, let us return to Kirby’s explanation of how Vermigli escapes the possible tensions inherent in his work.

Kirby’s account relies on a distinction Vermigli makes on the first page of the *De Magistratu scholium*, between laws “touching outward discipline” and “the inward motions of the mind.”⁹⁰ Based on this distinction, Kirby maintains that the “nature of ecclesiastical power” for Vermigli is “inherently equivocal,” consisting of two non-overlapping aspects:

To the extent that the ecclesiastical jurisdiction is involved in the ‘lawes touching outwarde discipline’ it is properly subordinated to the rule of the civil magistrate. At the same time, the magistrate is bound to submit to the jurisdiction of that aspect of ecclesiastical power exercised in matters concerning ‘the inwarde motions of the minde.’ Thus in the internal and invisible realm of the *civitas Dei*, power is immediately derived from the divine source without the mediation of the magistrate; in the external and visible realm of the *civitas terrena*, on the other hand, civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction are united in the Prince or magistrate.⁹¹

According to Kirby, therefore, Vermigli circumvents both a Manichean dualism, and an ‘Erastian’ conflation of civil and ecclesiastical powers by asserting that there are two separate kinds of ecclesiastical power (or better: two aspects in which authority is exercised in the Church). Their distinction, moreover, is a function of the distinction between an internal and an external realm. Rather than holding a Manichean distinction between flesh and spirit, the fundamental distinction in the work of Kirby’s Vermigli is therefore between ‘inward’ and ‘outward.’ In everything related to ‘outward’ matters, the supreme power and authority over both civil and ecclesiastical matters lies with the magistrate. In everything ‘inward’, however, the supreme power is neither with the magistrate, nor mediated by him, but “immediately derived from the divine source.” It remains unclear, however, why this immediate power should still be termed – as in the above quotation – an “aspect of ecclesiastical power.” Is this power not operative independently of the Church?

⁹⁰ “ad externam disciplinam leges;” “ad intimos usque motus animorum” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 183r-v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 26.)

⁹¹ Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology*, 70.

Nothing can be said against Kirby's interpretation of Vermigli, as long as he merely argues that for Vermigli "the power exercised by ministers through the Word in the 'inward motions of the minde' is sharply distinguished from that wielded by the magistrate through the sword in matters of 'outward discipline.'"⁹² However, everything hangs on the interjection "through the Word" here: when ministers exercise power over peoples' inner life, they do not exercise power themselves, nor even in the function of their office, for Vermigli. Their power hangs entirely on the word of God. And as I have shown above, Vermigli categorically refuses the need for any kind of institutional mediation of the word of God. Ministers therefore do not mediate the word of God *qua* their office; they merely voice it, as anyone equally could. Therefore, when Kirby distinguishes between two aspects of "ecclesiastical power" in Vermigli's work, he fails to acknowledge that the "power of the Church," for Vermigli, never straightforwardly equals "the power of the word of God."

It is doubtful, moreover, whether the distinction between 'inward' and 'outward' can usefully serve as a hermeneutic key to the way in which Vermigli envisages the distinction between the spheres of authority of the civil and ecclesiastical powers, for two main reasons.

First, this distinction seems difficult to maintain in reality. What would it mean for something to be an 'inward' issue or offence? Toying with heretical ideas, or entertaining violent, lusty or gluttonous thoughts? If these are the kind of "inward motions of the mind" which fall under the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical power, according to Kirby's Vermigli, then, presumably, as soon as these thoughts are turned into actions, they become 'outward' and visible, and hence fall under the magistrate's jurisdiction. However, such a distinction would be impossible to maintain in practice, because the distinction between thoughts and actions is fluid: ideas can be agents, and actions can engender thoughts.

Secondly, and more importantly, Vermigli's writings in *De Magistratu* and elsewhere suggest that his use of the term "outward" serves a very specific purpose, and one that is *not* about demarcating realms of power. The immediate context of the first instance where Vermigli mentions "outward discipline" in *De Magistratu* – the one quoted

⁹² Ibid., 72.

by Kirby – is telling. Vermigli writes that magistrates are to ensure the adherence to the “laws regarding outward discipline through punishing transgressors with bodily punishments.”⁹³ This suggests that Vermigli’s “outward discipline” relates to the manner of punishment appropriate to the magistrate, such as imprisonment or exile. Such punishments of the body cannot be administered by ministers of the Church, as their manner of punishing is clearly defined – as we shall see – through a church discipline modelled after Matthew 18:15-17.

Paragraphs 10-12 of *De Magistratu* display most evidently that the point of Vermigli’s association of ‘outward discipline’ with the magistrate is not that magistrates – in his view – are responsible for an outward, bodily realm whereas ministers care for an internal, spiritual realm. Rather, by associating outward discipline with magistrates, Vermigli reserves certain ways of punishing offenders to the civil power. Indeed, Vermigli explicitly debunks Kirby’s idea of a distinction between a “*civitas terrena*” and a “*civitas dei*” as follows:

Ought bishops to take care only of souls, and not of bodies also? What if [their flock] give themselves up to gluttony or drunkenness, or live licentiously regarding outward behavior, should bishops not reprove these things? They surely should, and neither should princes only take care of their subjects’ bodies, and neglect their souls.⁹⁴

Vermigli could not be clearer: bishops must reprove the illicit *outward* behavior of those entrusted to their care, and princes, in turn, ought not to neglect the souls of their subjects. They both care for the holistic wellbeing of the people. Where they differ is in the way they reprove offenders:

Whatever difference there is, ... it entirely concerns the manner of reproof. This the ministers of the Church reprove through the word, princes through outward punishments.⁹⁵

⁹³ “... ut quo ad externam disciplinam leges custodiat, poena corporis transgressores plectendo.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 183r; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 26.)

⁹⁴ “An animos tantum curare debent episcopi, nonne etiam corpora? Quid si se gulae aut ebrietati dedant, vel in externo cultu lasciviant, nonne ista reprehendent? Certe reprehendent. Nec princeps corpora tantum hominum curabit, et negliget animos.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 185v; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 34.)

⁹⁵ “Quicquid est discriminis, totum id est ... quo ad modum coercendi. Ministri Ecclesiae id verbo faciunt, principes externis poenis.” (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 186r; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 36.)

The kinds of penalties princes or magistrates can inflict on their erring subjects are outward. This means that they can remove a bishop whose conduct is bad. In fact, this seems to be one of the main purposes of Vermigli's deliberations here: he wishes to maintain that "although a king may remove an unprofitable and harmful bishop, a bishop cannot in turn depose a king, if he sinned."⁹⁶ This is to say that a bishop's tools for admonishing kings, in Vermigli's mind, simply do not include dethronement. This is a special application of Vermigli's general principle that the Church's tools for admonishing cannot be "outward," or involving any physical force. Excommunication is the most severe punishment a minister of the church can administer, which – as Vermigli reminds his readers – happened to several emperors in history who were excommunicated for committing public grievous sins. Vermigli's conclusion from this is, however, that while "Ambrose and Innocent excommunicated Emperors, they proceeded no further."⁹⁷ Ministers of the Church cannot, in Vermigli's view, use force to remove emperors from their position. Similarly, they cannot use any 'outward' measures beyond admonitions, and – should the offender fail to repent – excommunication, to punish erring members of the Church.

All of this is confirmed by the way Vermigli envisages ecclesiastical discipline. As both Kingdon and Ackroyd have shown, Church discipline forms one of the three marks of the Church for Vermigli – along with pure preaching of the word of God and the proper administration of the sacraments.⁹⁸ In a definition he makes in the context of his commentary on 1 Cor 10, Vermigli defines Church discipline as follows:

It is nothing else but a power granted to the Church by God, by which the wills and actions of the faithful are made comfortable to the law of God: which is done by doctrine, admonitions, correction, and finally by punishments, and also by excommunication if necessary.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ "Sed quamvis rex possit removere inutilem ac noxium episcopum, non tamen episcopus potest vicissim regem, si peccaverit, deicere." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 186r; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 36.)

⁹⁷ "Ambrosius et Innocentius excommunicarunt Imperatores. At non sunt progressi ulterius." (Vermigli, *In librum iudicum commentarii*, 186r; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 36.)

⁹⁸ Ackroyd, "The Unwelcome Bridle"; Kingdon, "Peter Martyr Vermigli and the Marks of the True Church."

⁹⁹ "Nihil aliud est quam facultas ecclesiae, divinitus concessa, qua voluntates et actiones fidelium reddantur conformes divinae legi: quod sit doctrina, monitionibus, correctione, demumque poenis, etsi opus fuerit excommunicatione." (Vermigli, *Ad Corinthios*, 251v.)

Sometimes, Vermigli holds moreover, the Church takes such disciplinary measures even when the civil authorities will turn a blind eye: magistrates tolerate adultery, drunkenness and slander, whereas the Church cannot allow such behaviour.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, the civil authorities are not concerned with whether or not offenders repent as long as they serve their sentences, whereas the church cannot reconcile offenders unless they are penitent.¹⁰¹ This means that Vermigli distinguishes the Church's jurisdiction from the one exercised by the civil authorities. There are differences both in the scope of offences with which they are concerned, and in the purposes of correction. Furthermore, from the instances mentioned which call for Church discipline, it is obvious that Church discipline, in Vermigli's view, cannot merely be concerned with 'inward motions of the mind.' Adultery, drunkenness and slander are hardly only motions of the mind, but actions that are 'outward' insofar as they are necessarily embodied and affect other people. The fact, therefore, that Vermigli envisages specific disciplinary cases that are proper to the Church (only), is another reason why Kirby's exclusive association of outward discipline with the civil authorities cannot be upheld.

A final difficulty with Kirby's reading of Vermigli concerns his emphasis that Vermigli is allegedly "Augustinian" by maintaining a "clear distinction between the orders of Grace and Nature."¹⁰² There are reasons to believe that such a "clear" distinction is not genuinely Augustinian at all, but rather owing to an imposition of modern categories on St. Augustine.¹⁰³ Regardless of whether it is fair to call such a distinction Augustinian, however, – something which cannot be investigated within the scope of the present study – it is far from evident that it is 'Vermiglian.' For is not the very fact that God ordains princes and that they mediate His power evidence that their 'natural' power is somehow 'graced'? Moreover, as I have argued in Chapter One, despite his strong understanding of the fallenness of creation, there are strands in Vermigli's thinking that display his belief in

¹⁰⁰ Originating from the *scholium* on excommunication, at the end of his commentary on 1 Cor 5: "Sed isti noverint plurima esse vitia, ad quae leges civiles connivent, ut adulteria, ebrietates, maledicentia, et id genus, quae tamen ab Ecclesia ferri non possunt." (Ibid., 129r.)

¹⁰¹ "Deinde magistratus punit saepius pecunia, certo exilio et carcere ad tempus, quibus poenis depensis, cives restituit, neque poenitentiam ullam requirit: Ecclesia vero minime potest nisi poenitentes reconciliare. Non itaque confundantur potestates: Alia esto civilis, alia ecclesiastica." (Ibid.)

¹⁰² Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology*, 72.

¹⁰³ See on this e.g. Michael Hanby, *Augustine and Modernity* (London: Routledge, 2003). Hanby refutes the thesis by Stephen Menn and others who see Augustine as essentially a pioneering a modern conception of the subject. (Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).)

God working intrinsically in all of nature. Consequently, Vermigli at least sometimes holds that nature is governed in its entirety by God in such a way that a clear line cannot usefully be drawn between “nature” and “grace.” In addition, as a corollary of a clear nature-grace distinction, Kirby holds that Vermigli “follows Augustine in looking directly to the incarnate Christ to accomplish an immediate union of the soul with God by grace alone in a ‘forensic’ justification.”¹⁰⁴ If, however, as we have seen in Chapter Two, Vermigli’s soteriology is not exclusively forensic, then such an argument becomes more difficult to maintain.

In conclusion, Torrance Kirby is right in perceiving tensions in Vermigli’s political theology. However, for the reasons we have seen, his attempt to resolve the tensions in Vermigli’s political work by distinguishing an external political realm of power from an internal spiritual realm is highly problematic.

How, then, can we make sense of the tension between the conflicting authorities – the magistrate and the word of God – in Vermigli’s ideal commonwealth? We could take a ‘Skinnerian’ route and judge that Vermigli’s thought simply is not coherent. A more interesting judgement, however, would be one that takes into account the reasons *why* there are tensions, or perhaps an incoherence, in Vermigli’s thinking. Our answer to this question, as we shall develop it in the following final section of this chapter, is that the tensions in Vermigli’s political theology are a function of the fact that he simultaneously inhabits two metaphysical frameworks, with two different understandings of causality.

6) The Implied Metaphysics of Vermigli’s Political Theology

We have seen how the magistrate, in Vermigli’s view, mediates God’s power and authority. The structure of authority thus conveyed is one in which God is seen as the primordial giver of authority, who shares his power with lesser authorities. In this sense – and as Vermigli explicitly holds – the magistrate is “between God and human beings.”¹⁰⁵ Even though his language of the magistrate being in God’s place could indicate a representational (rather than ontologically determined) structure of power, where the magistrate represents God without participating in him, his emphasis on mediation

¹⁰⁴ Kirby, *The Zurich Connection and Tudor Political Theology*, 66.

¹⁰⁵ “Constituatur princeps, qui inter Deum et homines Dei vices gerat.” (Vermigli, *Ad Romanos*, 609; Kingdon, *Political Thought*, 12.)

suggests otherwise. Moreover, Vermigli is unambiguous about his belief that lesser authorities – the magistrates – participate in God’s power. This indicates that he presupposes a structure of authority in which God acts in and through worldly power structures. He does not work alongside the magistrates, or merely delegate his power to them, but works through them.

Therefore, the acts of the magistrate unite in themselves divine and human causality. The two causalities do not compete, but rather one indwells the other, as it were. This is because in this framework, causality and authority are ontologically determined. God is not only the giver of power but – as creator – is also the giver of being. He creates magistrates and bestows power to them as part of their very being. This means that power cannot be a disembodied or abstract force, as God does not share it outside of his creative sharing of being. Consequently, in such a framework, there is no hierarchy of power outside of a hierarchical ontology.

As a result, communities and commonwealths with such structures of authority, which are based on a shared participation in God’s being and power, are communities where each member has belonging through his or her specially assigned place. It might be objected, however, that such communities are in danger of harbouring or legitimizing oppression. Indeed, the fact that all power derives from a single source does come with the potential danger of fostering totalitarianisms. Because Vermigli believes in the goodness of God as the source of power, however, this does not seem to trouble him. Moreover, the strength of a community structured in such a way is that it is unified. It is precisely this non-fragmentation that attracts Vermigli to this structure. As we have seen above, Vermigli wishes for the commonwealth to be unified, as this is the prerequisite for peace.

Another picture presents itself in the case of God’s power and authority manifested in his word. Here, God’s power needs no mediation, as Vermigli maintains. It is self-explanatory, immediately awe-inspiring and as such essentially self-mediating. Consequently, God’s power needs no institutional structures to embody or channel it in this case. Indeed, its authority sits uneasily with worldly structures of authority, as it not only has no need of them but in fact actively circumvents them. God wields his authority through his word not in and through worldly authorities, but somehow alongside them. Consequently, if magistrates act according to the precepts of the word of God, their acts

have two partial causes: the magistrates themselves and the word of God. The two causes can moreover potentially be in competition with each other.

This is an effect of the fact that in the case of the non-mediated power of his word, God's authority is somewhat disembodied. It is not necessarily linked to the essence of those endowed with it. In short: authority is not determined ontologically. Consequently, communities governed by this kind of authority are held together only through a shared agreement to accept this immediate authority. These communities rely on a more or less explicit 'contract' through which everyone submits to the immediate authority of the word of God. They equally rely on a shared understanding of what this authority demands. If there are to be no privileged interpreters or mediators of it, then every member of the community has to agree on what the word of God demands. As we have seen above, Vermigli is very optimistic in this regard, believing that it is possible to achieve an agreement on what the word of God calls means and requests, and that hermeneutic considerations are superfluous because of the perspicuity of Scripture. Consequently, Vermigli relies, on the one hand, on a kind of unified Christendom; a unified commonwealth governed by a magistrate in God's stead, in which a commonly shared 'objective' understanding of the word of God can be taken for granted. On the other hand, however, his (and his fellow reformers') insistence on the authority due to the word of God, and the alleged immediate clarity of their understanding of it, did not foster such unified commonwealths. It proved impossible, in practice, to achieve a commonly shared 'objective' understanding of the word of God. The irony that Vermigli depends on a unified commonwealth, which his own political theology cannot cultivate, however, springs from his hermeneutic decision that God's power as given in his word needs no mediation.

In conclusion, the two conflicting authorities in Vermigli's ideal commonwealth – the magistrate and the word of God – each function within different structures of authority, and they in turn grow out of two metaphysical frameworks insofar as they embody different visions of how God's power works in the world. If this is the case, however, then it is no wonder that there are tensions in Vermigli's political theology, because they are another means by which the non-uniform metaphysics underlying Vermigli's thought is made manifest.

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The challenge involved in studying “metaphysics in the Reformation” is that none of the Protestant Reformers commented on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*, or directly expounded on themes relating to the being of God and the world at any length. In order to examine the metaphysics sustaining the thought of a Reformer, we must therefore proceed indirectly, taking seemingly ‘religious’ or ‘confessional’ texts on subjects such as justification, the sacraments or political theology, and screening them for the metaphysical framework(s) implied within them. This is what I have done in the present study, taking Peter Martyr Vermigli as a case study. In these concluding pages, I will reflect on the merits and limits of such an approach, and consider what our argument means for understanding Vermigli’s work, and the Reformation more broadly.

The argument returned to in every chapter of this dissertation has been that the metaphysics sustaining Vermigli’s thought is complex in that it simultaneously inhabits a participatory and a univocal metaphysical framework. These two alternatives of how to envisage the relationship between God’s being and the being of the world have been the hermeneutic lens through which I have analysed Peter Martyr Vermigli’s thought. Some might object that enquiring into Vermigli’s implied metaphysics amounts to imposing alien, anachronistic categories onto his work. I have indeed read him against the background of concepts which he does not explicitly use. However, apart from the fact that it is impossible to read historical texts without a hermeneutic lens, and that it seems preferable to be upfront about one’s own, I would like to make the case that this approach is warranted for two reasons.

The first reason is theological, and follows from a ‘strong’ theology of creation, which involves the conviction that everything about everything is created and sustained by God. If this theological premise is granted, then there can be no strict separation between ‘religious’ and ‘philosophical’ discourses, or between faith and reason. It follows moreover that one should not envisage there to be purely ‘philosophical’ or rational discourses outside God’s gift of grace. All of this has been argued in great detail and applied to various contexts by exponents of the *Nouvelle Théologie*, or by members of the ‘Cambridge School’, for instance. What I propose to do is to attend to the flipside of this

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argument. For if it is true that there is no strict separation between faith and reason, and that hence there are no purely 'philosophical' discourses, then surely this equally means that there can be no purely 'religious' or 'doctrinal' discourses either. As soon as a text is part of a discourse, it wants to be understood. By explaining, arguing or refuting something, it presupposes some form of a reasoned communication, and implies shared structures of thinking that are intelligible to others. In this sense, all religious discourse is philosophical. More specifically, it could be said that all religious discourse is metaphysical, insofar as it is sustained by a Divine 'Other', and insofar as this necessarily raises the question as to how this 'Other' relates to the self. And metaphysics, as I have understood it here, is concerned with the most fundamental – ontological – dimension of this very relationship.

Therefore, even if Vermigli did not spell out how he envisaged God's being and the being of the world to relate, he assumed there to be a God, and for God to relate to the world. Accordingly, to enquire into his implied metaphysics is to make this dimension of his work, which had been there all along, more explicit. Reading Vermigli's work against the backdrop of different metaphysical frameworks does not therefore amount to an imposition of alien categories upon it, but rather to taking seriously that it has 'philosophical' weight even where it focusses on classically 'religious' or 'doctrinal' themes. It is on this basis that it seems no external imposition on Vermigli's theological anthropology, his theology of justification, his Eucharistic thought, and his political theology to investigate them with a view to the metaphysics implicitly at work in them.

The second reason why the approach taken in this study seems warranted is a more pragmatic one. We have seen that it yields fruitful results. The argument that Vermigli's work simultaneously inhabits a participatory and a univocal metaphysical framework has provided us with means by which to express some of the complexities in his thought which have not been fully accounted for by earlier commentators. Therefore, one merit of enquiring into implied metaphysics lies in its capacity to give expression to some of the intricate configurations in the sources at hand. It would seem that if a hermeneutical lens enables readers to understand what they are reading at a deeper level, and if it gives them tools to make sense of and express what they have read more comprehensively, then the interpretative yield gained thereby, ought to justify the approach taken.

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Having said this, the approach taken in this study has its limitations. For one thing, not every theological statement is always indicative of a clear metaphysical framework sustaining it. Readers may disagree over the way I have 'translated' certain quotes from Vermigli into a metaphysical framework. There are indeed grey zones, and some – but certainly not all – of Vermigli's statements could make sense in either of the two frameworks described. However, the fact that not all his statements are metaphysically determinate does not invalidate our claim about the complexity of his metaphysics.

Another more serious limitation of my approach is that the two metaphysical frameworks described – univocal and participatory – are ideal types. In reality, they will never appear in a pure form, and it is not my intention to suggest that they do. I have used them merely as heuristic devices. They made it possible to find and give expression to an intriguing plurality in Vermigli's thought. However, it would be ironic if the very argument that Vermigli's implied metaphysics is in flux would lead to the illusory impression that the two alternatives between which he moves are absolute and reified. Because of this, it would be misleading to conclude from this study that Vermigli's thought was inconsistent. For another thing, this conclusion would mean to assume that there has to be a radical either-or between the two metaphysical frameworks described. Vermigli's work seems to suggest that it makes no sense to conceive of such a radical either-or. Instead, it seems more useful to conceive of degrees of metaphysical complexity. My argument is that the degree in which Vermigli's implied metaphysics is 'plural' or complex is higher than the metaphysical complexity we would find in some thinkers of other ages.

It may nevertheless be objected that the drift of this dissertation is that Vermigli's position is inconsistent. However, even if this were the case, then Vermigli is rather 'consistently inconsistent'. We have observed a similar pattern or move – that of the non-uniformity of his implied metaphysics – in very different parts of his thought. Time and again, there are elements of his thought that are sustained by a metaphysical participation as well as other elements which presuppose a univocal metaphysics. Surely there is something more interesting to be learned from this observation than the judgement that Vermigli 'simply does not make sense'. This judgement seems lazy, and also somewhat presumptuous – after all, we are dealing with one of the brightest theological minds of the sixteenth century. Furthermore, behind any judgement of incoherence, there is a desire to synthesise. But is not anyone wishing to synthesise the different ways in which

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Vermigli envisages God and the world to relate, imposing an external, anachronistic category on the sources, namely, ‘coherence’ as they understand it? For all of these reasons, I propose to call Vermigli’s metaphysics ‘complex’.

I moreover suggest that the degree to which the implied metaphysics in Vermigli’s thought is complex is not unique for his time, and indeed rather typical for the Reformation. This is why the present study is designed as a case study. It would have been beyond the scope of the present dissertation to examine ‘the Reformation’ as a whole; instead, I have focussed on *one* thinker of the Reformation. I propose, however, that the findings we have gained from analysing the implied metaphysics of this one thinker, can teach us something about the nature of the Reformation more broadly. In the remainder of this conclusion, I will elaborate on why it seems justified to consider Vermigli as a case study for the Reformation in general, and what it might suggest for our understanding of the Reformation if the implied metaphysical complexity we have found in Vermigli’s thought can be seen as typical for the Reformation.

I suggest that in terms of his implied metaphysics, Vermigli is only one among other possible examples in the Reformation, but that his is a good example. We have seen how Vermigli was at the academic forefront, defending the cause of the Reformation in debates and through his written work in places as prominent as Oxford, Strasbourg and Zurich. It seems likely that the complexity I have been describing is more clearly manifest in someone as scholarly and academically vocal as Vermigli. As we have seen, he was known for his thoroughness and rigour in the way in which he expounded theological matters, and in the manner in which he engaged with arguments of his opponents. In the detailed expositions flowing from this, both his *scholia* and his polemical works, the kind of complexity that I have described arguably manifested itself more clearly than in less rigorous or less detailed works. It seems moreover fitting to take Vermigli as a case study for studying the implied metaphysics of the Reformation because he is articulate in ‘philosophical’ terms, especially in the thought of Aristotle, employing his categories, such as the fourfold causes, in his writing. Regardless of whether this tendency indicates anything about Vermigli’s scholasticism – we have seen how the respective debates are less than fruitful – it facilitates the kind of ‘translation’ between a theological statement and the metaphysical framework or frameworks it inhabits with which this study has been

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concerned. Examining Vermigli's work seems therefore useful and fitting for the present context.

However, Vermigli is not only a *good* example, but also a good *example*. I would like to suggest that the metaphysical complexity which we have found to sustain his work is typical for the Reformation more broadly. It would go beyond the scope of this study to argue in any detail that the work of Luther, Calvin or others equally manifests an implicitly complex metaphysics. In order to establish this hypothesis more fully, their work would have to be analysed in similar ways to those by which this study has analysed Vermigli's work. All I can do here is point to indirect evidence which seems to suggest that Vermigli is not the only example of a Reformer whose implied metaphysics is complex.

Recent developments in Luther and Calvin scholarship highlight a dimension of *theosis*, and the believer's participation in the Divine, in their thought. This dimension naturally follows from a participatory metaphysics. In the case of Luther, a group of Finnish Luther experts have argued that the heart of Luther's theology of human salvation is not his understanding of justification as imputed to human beings through Christ in faith, or the *simul iustus et peccator*, but an understanding of human participation in Christ. The Finnish scholars are working in the context of ecumenical exchanges between Lutheranism and Russian Orthodoxy and find that their reading of Luther's view of justification resonates fruitfully with Orthodox notions of *theosis* or deification.¹ As exponents of this Finnish school explicitly acknowledge, these newly discovered layers in

¹ The most recent summary of this view is: Risto Saarinen, "Justification by Faith: The View of the Mannermaa School," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel, and Lubomir Batka (Oxford University Press, 2014), 255–59. As intimated by Saarinen's title, Tuomo Mannermaa is considered the founder of this Finnish reappraisal of Luther. Among his ground-breaking works count the following: Tuomo Mannermaa, *Der im Glauben gegenwärtige Christus: Rechtfertigung und Vergottung zum ökumenischen Dialog* (Hannover: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1989); Tuomo Mannermaa, "Theosis als Thema der finnischen Lutherforschung," in *Luther und Theosis: Vergöttlichung als Thema der abendländischen Theologie*, ed. Simo Peura and Antti Raunio (Erlangen: Luther-Akademie Ratzeburg, 1990). For an excellent overview of the Finnish School and its reception in the English-speaking world, see: Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson, eds., *Union with Christ* (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998). A critical debate about it took place 2003 in *The Westminster Theological Journal*: Mark A Seifrid, "Paul, Luther, and Justification in Gal 2:15-21," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 65, no. 2 (September 2003): 215–30; Carl R Trueman, "Is the Finnish Line a New Beginning?: A Critical Assessment of the Reading of Luther Offered by the Helsinki Circle," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 65, no. 2 (September 2003): 231–44; Paul Louis Metzger, "Mystical Union with Christ: An Alternative to Blood Transfusions and Legal Fictions," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 65, no. 2 (September 2003): 201–13; Robert W Jenson, "Response to Mark Seifrid, Paul Metzger, and Carl Trueman on Finnish Luther Research," *The Westminster Theological Journal* 65, no. 2 (September 2003): 245–50. Furthermore, see: Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *One with God: Salvation as Deification and Justification* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2004).

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Luther's work are premised on a realist metaphysical framework, especially on the analogy of being and metaphysical participation.²

As for Calvin, Todd Billings, in his *Calvin, Participation and the Gift*, has rekindled an older reading of the Reformer which sees his work as premised on creaturely participation in the Divine.³ Such an interpretation paints a rather different picture of Calvin than does more traditional Calvin scholarship, focusing on Calvin's theology of God's glory and human sinfulness. Billings argues for a "theological logic of participation" at work in Calvin.⁴ Julie Canlis concurs, and has moreover argued not only that Calvin's theology presupposes a notion of participation in the Divine, but also a notion of spiritual ascent.⁵ In parallel to what the Finnish school claims about Luther, other Calvin scholars have moreover maintained that Calvin's theology has scope for a notion of deification and mediation.⁶ All of this is again premised on a framework of metaphysical participation.

However, more traditional Reformation scholarship would dispute these participatory elements to be present in Luther's and Calvin's work at all, as can be seen in numerous critical responses to the Finnish school or Billings's readings of Calvin. Rather, they insist that their account of justification and grace is classically forensic, and hence – as we have seen in chapter two – based on a univocal notion of gift. The metaphysical framework implicitly sustaining the 'classic' picture of Luther's and Calvin's work can therefore be said to be largely univocal. What is more, the strand of Catholic Reformation scholarship which goes from Denifle through Lortz to Bouyer, which we have seen in the introduction, indirectly concurs with this. It holds that the Reformation is governed by nominalist structures, and while it is contested whether nominalism entails a

² Sammeli Juntunen argues that "Luther ... does not deny the analogy of being and goodness between God and the world." See Sammeli Juntunen, "Luther and Metaphysics: What Is the Structure of Being According to Luther?," in *Union with Christ: The New Finnish Interpretation of Luther*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1998), 132.

³ J. Todd Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift: The Activity of Believers in Union With Christ* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007). An earlier example of this kind of reading of Calvin can be seen in the so-called Mercersburg theology, and John Williamson Nevin in particular. See John Williamson Nevin, *The Mystical Presence* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1963).

⁴ Billings, *Calvin, Participation, and the Gift*, 191.

⁵ Julie Canlis, "Calvin, Osiander, and Participation in God," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 6, no. 2 (2004): 169–84; Canlis, *Calvin's Ladder*.

⁶ Carl Mosser, "The Greatest Possible Blessing: Calvin and Deification," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 55, no. 1 (2002): 36–57; McClean, "Perichoresis, Theosis and Union with Christ in the Thought of John Calvin"; Edwin Chr. van Driel, "'Too Lowly to Reach God Without a Mediator': John Calvin's Supralapsarian Eschatological Narrative," *Modern Theology* 33, no. 2 (2017): 275–92.

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metaphysical dimension at all, it is safe to say that if it does, then it would much more easily align with a univocal than with a participatory metaphysical framework. In terms of the nature of metaphysical frameworks implied in Luther's and Calvin's thought, many strands of more traditional Reformation scholarship converge to suggest that it is univocal.⁷ By contrast, the newer readings of Luther's and Calvin's work that we have seen, presuppose an implicitly participatory metaphysics at work in the latter.

Faced with these newer readings of the Reformers, one has three choices: one denies that they are legitimate and discards them altogether, or one welcomes them, implying that the 'real' Luther and Calvin has finally been found after nearly half a millennium of misunderstanding, or else one finds a way of reconciling the old and the new readings. One way to reconcile them is to postulate that Luther's and Calvin's works are as much sustained by a complex metaphysical framework as is Vermigli's. The new readings of their work would then have uncovered a 'layer' of implied metaphysics that had always been there, but that had not yet been attended to. This hypothesis allows us to make sense of how it is possible that Luther's works can be interpreted as differently as by classical Luther scholarship, on the one hand, and the Finnish school, on the other hand (and the same – *mutatis mutandis* – in the case of Calvin). According to this hypothesis, classical Luther scholarship has focussed more on those elements in Luther's work that are sustained by a univocal metaphysics, whereas the Finnish school concentrates on other facets, such as those which imply a participatory metaphysics. If Luther's metaphysics has been complex in the first place, then it would not come as a surprise that these different aspects of his work can, and eventually would be unearthed.

Supposing this hypothesis is correct, and the metaphysical plurality seen in Peter Martyr Vermigli's work is not unique to him, but typical of the Protestant Reformation, then this has far-reaching consequences for understanding the Reformation, which I can merely sketch here.⁸

First of all, the history and development of Protestantism may be better understood by considering the long-term effects of the metaphysical complexity at the

⁷ Graham White's work, while falling in neither of the above categories, also suggests this. See Graham White, *Luther as Nominalist: A Study of the Logical Methods Used in Martin Luther's Disputations in the Light of Their Medieval Background* (Helsinki: Luther-Agricola-Society, 1994).

⁸ The following is taken from a forthcoming article, see Aspray, "A Complex Legacy: Louis Bouyer and the Metaphysics of the Reformation."

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heart of Reformation thought. For if the Reformers simultaneously inhabited two metaphysical frameworks, then what does this mean for the development of their legacy? Louis Bouyer has argued that Reformation thought was characterised by positive truths trapped in a stifling, negative framework. In his view, this framework inevitably led to the fact that some of the Reformers' insights were subsequently overturned. If, however, the framework sustaining the Reformers' thought was not uniform, then there cannot have been such an historical necessity. Rather, the Reformers' legacy *could have* potentially evolved differently. Peter Martyr Vermigli at least partially inhabited a metaphysics of participation. Because of this part of the Reformation's legacy, any eventual overturning of Reformation affirmations cannot have been an inexorable fate. Even if it is granted that it was under the influence of univocal ontological structures that some Reformation insights were eventually overturned, as Bouyer holds, this does not sufficiently explain why these structures should have prevailed over the alternative metaphysical structures which had equally been present in the Reformation.

Why, then, did the metaphysically univocal strand of Reformation thought eventually gain the upper hand? One possible reason for this is that it resonated with and was enforced by larger cultural and philosophical developments. Scholars have argued that univocal structures of being gradually became prevalent in the West in the past few hundred years, and have manifested themselves in so-called modern developments such as the secularisation of knowledge, the individualisation and fragmentation of society and the rise of a monetary economy.⁹ The question whether and how the Reformation was causally involved in these developments has been hotly debated at least since Max Weber's famous thesis on the nexus between Protestantism and capitalism.¹⁰ Brad Gregory is a recent commentator who emphatically holds the view that the Reformation is causally linked to key elements of contemporary Western culture.¹¹ In particular, he takes the view that the disagreements in the Reformation over what counted as Christian produced a "wide range of incompatible truth claims," which necessarily had to relativize each other.¹² This is why the Reformation, according to Gregory, is "the most important

⁹ Alliez, *Capital Times*; Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*; Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*; Pfau, *Minding the Modern: Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions, and Responsible Knowledge*.

¹⁰ Max Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1934).

¹¹ Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society*.

¹² *Ibid.*, 95.

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distant historical source for contemporary Western hyper-pluralism with respect to truth claims about meaning, morality, values, priorities and purpose.”¹³

If the Reformation was not characterized by a univocal metaphysics *only*, however, it becomes more problematic to hold a line of argument which makes of the Reformation a motor of modernity, while predicating modernity on univocal structures of being, as Gregory does. To be sure, our thesis about the metaphysical complexity of the Reformation does not make impossible the argument of a certain nexus between the Reformation and certain so-called modern developments. It recognizes this nexus precisely because it grants that there were univocal structures of being present in the Reformation. What it challenges, however, are accounts which claim the Reformation to be linked to these kinds of developments *only* – and Gregory, even though certainly aware of the intricacy of the genealogical claims he is making, sometimes seems to take this line.

However, why has the reception history of the Reformers’ thought until relatively recently been dominated by the univocal strand of their thought? As we have suggested, it is likely that broader developments in the history of the West shaped the way in which Reformation thought has been perceived. The metaphysical complexity of Reformation thought precisely means that it can be perceived and framed differently: it is somewhat malleable.¹⁴ Put differently: the Reformation’s implied metaphysical complexity may have meant that the heirs of the Reformation were able to embrace whatever framework became culturally prevalent. If univocal structures of being have become prevalent in the last few centuries in the West, as many commentators believe,¹⁵ then this suggests a reason why the univocal strands in Reformation thought have become dominant. Insofar as a certain metaphysical malleability was constitutive of Reformation thought, this meant that it had few structures of resistance in place against the influence of the above-mentioned cultural and philosophical developments of the West in the past centuries

¹³ Ibid., 369.

¹⁴ Some see this ‘malleability’ as a virtue. In Todd Billings’s view, it was a strength of the Reformers’ thought that they did not settle for one metaphysical framework. “Bringing closure on points of metaphysical ambiguity,” for Billings, would not be desirable (Billings, *Calvin, Participation and the Gift*, 195.) The fact that Calvin’s thought was somewhat vague metaphysically, left it “open to be adapted to a wide range of metaphysical frameworks.” (Ibid., 194.) However, this conclusion assumes that there is a separation between doctrinal ‘content’ and metaphysical ‘form’ or idiom, with Calvin’s ‘content’ standing independently of its idiom. It is doubtful, as we have seen, that this separation can be upheld.

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. Gillespie, *The Theological Origins of Modernity*; Milbank, *Beyond Secular Order*; Pfau, *Minding the Modern: Human Agency, Intellectual Traditions, and Responsible Knowledge*.

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(secularisation, individualisation, fragmentation). In short, therefore, the reasons why one metaphysical strand present in Reformation thought came to flourish, whereas another did not, seem to lie not so much in the Reformation itself as in the powerful influence of what came to be known as modernity.

Once more, this indicates that those who wish causally and tightly to link the Reformation to ‘modern’ developments are missing the mark. If one were to charge Reformation thought for being in some ways complicit in these developments, then a more sophisticated line of argument might run as follows. The metaphysical complexity of the Reformation, in its ability to inhabit multiple metaphysical frameworks at once, could be predicated on a ‘higher-level’ univocal metaphysics. This is because the condition of possibility of a plurality of metaphysical frameworks depends on the possibility of an epistemological distancing between the thinking subject and the world. This kind of distancing, however, might only be possible in a metaphysical framework in which essence and existence are not inherently linked. Such a ‘formal distinction’ is historically associated with the univocity of being, as Gilson has shown.¹⁶

However, if it is true that there was a metaphysical complexity at the heart of the Reformation, why is it that we have become aware of it only recently?¹⁷ The clue to answering this question, I would suggest, lies again in what we have suggested above about the powerful influence of modernity on the reception history of the Reformation. As readers of Reformation thought, we ourselves are influenced by the dominance of the univocal framework, because our access to historical texts is always historically mediated. There is a self-reflexivity at play: when thinking about history and reading its sources, we cannot step outside the particular historical moment we inhabit. It is possible, however, to thematise this redoubling of historical perspectives in and through exposing it, just as according to the artistic or literary figure of the *mise-en-abyme*.

From the perspective of a time in which ‘modern’ univocal tendencies were most fully developed, the univocal elements in the legacy of the Reformation were understood

¹⁶ Étienne Gilson, *Jean Duns Scot: introduction à ses positions fondamentales*, Études de philosophie médiévale 42 (Paris: J. Vrin, 1952), 243–48.

¹⁷ Parts of Henri De Lubac’s and Maurice Blondel’s works can be seen as foreshadowing this, without however dealing with the Reformation specifically. See for instance Blondel’s engagement with extrinsicism in *History and Dogma*, Maurice Blondel, *The Letter on Apologetics & History and Dogma*, trans. Alexander Dru and Illtyd Trethowan (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964).

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best. Readers of the Reformers' thought saw in it primarily what resonated with the predominant framework of the culture in which they lived. Put negatively, the more they themselves were 'modern', the more it was difficult for them to perceive what was not so 'modern' in the work of the Reformers. It seems, therefore, that it has become easier now – in what is commonly agreed to be at least late modernity¹⁸ – to perceive other metaphysical frameworks equally present in Reformation theology.

Indeed, we can assume that as the critical distance to 'high modernity' grows, scholars will understand more fully the degree to which traditional understandings of Reformation theology have been coloured by the univocal framework characteristic of modernity. The debates in New Testament scholarship about the 'old' and 'new' perspectives on Paul may be seen as an indication of a parallel case to this. Proponents of the new perspective have argued that certain 'old perspective' readings of 'works of the law' (as condemnable because they indicate the futile human attempt to earn salvation) which were traditionally associated with the Reformation and its heirs, are not in line with what Paul understood by the term (which is more to do with community markers of the old covenant).¹⁹ Insofar as the Reformation prided itself on its faithfulness to the Scriptures, it might emerge that the 'old' understanding of Paul is not so much a 'Protestant' understanding *per se*, as a particular modern reading of the Reformation and its profoundly complex legacy.

In the wake of the 500-year anniversary of the Reformation, there have been calls for a new return *ad fontes reformationis*, heralding a Protestant *ressourcement* from the sources of the Reformation. Our thesis concerning the metaphysical complexity of the Reformation may have implications for the conditions of possibility of such a *ressourcement*. For what does it mean to have recourse to sources which were as metaphysically complex as we suggest Reformation sources to be? To be sure, as we have seen above, in reality there may be no source in existence in any period which inhabits an entirely unified metaphysics. However, that there are degrees of metaphysical 'simplicity',

¹⁸ See for instance Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2007).

¹⁹ The 'old' perspective is exemplified in the work of the Lutheran Bultmann, whereas exponents of the 'new' perspective include Sanders, Dunn and Wright. See Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1953); E.P. Sanders, *Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); James D. G. Dunn, *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008); N.T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005). I am indebted to Dr. Matthew Thomas for these references.

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and it would seem that texts which more clearly inhabit one metaphysical framework than another are more powerful resources, especially when one is looking for alternatives to the perceived 'messiness' of today's intellectual climate. Perhaps, therefore, Protestants wishing to resource their theology would do well to draw from older sources than those stemming from early modernity.

In this sense, it is hoped that the present study is not only a case study of the implied metaphysics of one Protestant Reformer, but also an exercise in intellectual history in Annabel Brett's sense. Brett held that "intellectual history can itself be understood as poetic" insofar as it "does not merely unravel the structure of what we have inherited but can also unearth what we have lost: ways of speaking and ways of seeing the world, once current, now exotic and (perhaps) full of possibility."²⁰

²⁰ Annabel Brett, "What Is Intellectual History Now?," in *What Is History Now?*, ed. David Cannadine (Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 127.

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